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*Realscreen* chats with *Senna* director Asif Kapadia and archive producer Paul Bell to look under the hood of one of 2011's biggest docs. See page 59.



## HERE WE ARE NOW, ENGAGE US

This past November, I was invited by John Farren, creative director of 360 Production, to take part in a session he was master-minding at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers in Paris. The session was titled "Reasons to be Cheerful," and the gist of it was to bypass the moaning, groaning and bellyaching one sometimes hears at conferences and to instead celebrate what's right in the world of non-fiction content production. Some of us who suggested some reasons to be cheerful via email were then asked to make short two-minute presentations regarding said cheer.

When I'd finished reading John's initial email asking for contributions and feedback, admittedly, it didn't take me long to come up with a reason to be cheerful, or at least, hopeful. See, what's really getting me jazzed when it comes to the immediate future of non-fiction programming is the new era of engagement we find ourselves at the early and exciting stages of.

The happy marriage between social media and factual content is no longer simply the domain of game shows or reality programming. We've seen it in the super-effective outreach programs employed by such production companies as Participant Media with films such as *The Cove* and *Food Inc.*, and now we're seeing it work for factual content with a social conscience – witness two examples from KEO Films, namely, the *Hugh's Fish Fight* and *Chicken Out* campaigns, spearheaded by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. The campaigns mobilized viewers to take action, stand up and be counted in support of sustainable farming and fishing practices. Check out fishfight.net for a look. The smart thing with these efforts is that they put into practice one of the greatest truths about the Web – the Internet is forever. In a long-tail world, a campaign based on programming doesn't need to evaporate once the premiere's closing credits wrap.

These particular campaigns continue to gather momentum as we speak, keeping the issues and the programming itself front of mind. A lesson to learn: if you kill an audience engagement campaign that you've spent considerable resources building shortly after your program's airdate, you do the show, your brand and your audience a great disservice. Here's a key bit of takeaway from KEO's Zam Baring, quoted from a session at Banff: "Programs drive people online [and get them] engaged, and if you're lucky, [you can] use their engagement to make more telly." Baring's work in this space with KEO was seen by us at *realscreen* as such a cause for cheeriness that we named him as one of our Trailblazers for 2011 (see page 37 for the full feature).

To wrap up, let me paraphrase another quote from one of this year's other Trailblazers regarding the potential for this new era of engagement and how the Web and non-fiction programming can and should connect. As Katerina Cizek, webdoc director extraordinaire says, "The Internet is a documentary." It's a network that belongs to all of us. On that network, we want to share good stories, see good stories, and tell our own good stories. The good stories that you as producers and networks bring us on television are an integral part of that mix, and the smart producers and networks behind those stories are building the bridges that will not only let us see them and share them, but also be a part of them.

Cheers,  
Barry Walsh  
Editor  
*realscreen*

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## realscreen out & about

### A NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

2012 marks the 15th year of *realscreen*'s existence and, as one would expect, the evolution of the brand has mirrored that of the non-fiction industry. In 1997, *realscreen* touted itself as the source for info "about the business of docs, infomags and lifestyle programming." My, how times have changed.



As "The Golden Age of Non-Fiction," one of the high-profile panels at this month's Realscreen Summit, promises to confirm, what now falls under the non-fiction umbrella

is a far broader range of programming, encompassing everything from fact-ent formats and reality TV, to "capital D" documentary. Non-fiction entertainment is now a staple for broadcasters and cable nets internationally, and it's not only a TV phenomenon – a sizable percentage of the new niche channels coming to YouTube will be delivering non-fiction content.

In the coming months *realscreen* will be unveiling some exciting new initiatives

and changes to existing products within our brand, to ensure that we remain not only relevant, but ahead of the pack when it comes to fulfilling our mandate to connect the non-fiction industry to create real business opportunities.

At this year's Realscreen Summit, delegates will be introduced to **realXchange**, a business networking platform designed specifically for the global non-fiction community. It's your hub to all things *realscreen* and offers an incredible range of features designed to allow creators, buyers and distributors of non-fiction content to interact in a meaningful way. Features include deep project histories, allowing you to share your professional resumé; rich profiles; and the ability to connect with individuals who fall into similar interest groups. *Realscreen* event attendees and subscribers are provided premium access to the global non-fiction community. RealXchange will soft-launch at the end of January and will be finessed in the coming months. I sincerely hope to hear your feedback directly via [cmacdonald@brunico.com](mailto:cmacdonald@brunico.com).

There are some other changes coming, but I'll keep you in suspense.

'til next time, go well  
Claire Macdonald  
VP & Publisher  
*realscreen*

## UPCOMING ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### MARCH/APRIL

**Editorial features:** This issue will feature *realscreen*'s annual Global 100 list, our MIP Picks for MIPTV and a genre focus on Lifestyle programming. Also, look to help us celebrate Parthenon in an editorial spotlight highlighting its 10th anniversary.

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For information on any of these opportunities or to discuss something custom that we can do for you, call *realscreen* sales at **1 416 408 2300** and ask for Melissa Giddens at **X228** or Lisa Faktor at **X477**



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'A+E Networks' is the sum of A+E, History, Lifetime, Bio, H2, and LMN. Top 15 claim: cable non-fiction series 2011 (12/27/10-12/18/11).





Owens

# TAKING THE REINS

In his first interview as president of National Geographic Channels U.S., Howard T. Owens discusses making the move from production exec to network president, and the plans afoot for Nat Geo. BY BARRY WALSH

While some would be a little reticent to make the move from the sunny climes of Los Angeles to the more, shall we say, varied temperatures felt in Washington, DC, Howard T. Owens is taking it in stride.

"I think it's fun to be back in a place where the energy is hot and the weather's cold," says the recently appointed president of National Geographic Channels U.S.

Indeed, the energy in his new place of employment is, from outside appearances, undergoing a revitalization of sorts, mainly due to an influx of new blood in major executive roles. The revamp began with the appointment of David Lyle as CEO of NGC U.S. and global programming last summer, and is continuing with the arrival of Owens, most recently lead managing director for Reveille, one of the prodcos behind NBC's reality staple *The Biggest Loser*.

Owens, one of Reveille's founding partners, says he's known Lyle for years, dating back to his days as an agent at William Morris. He adds that once Lyle took the CEO role at NGC U.S., they began discussing Lyle's plans for the networks – NGC, Nat Geo Wild and Nat Geo Mundo – and Owens was "inspired about what he was trying to do."

"I'd been a longtime fan of the National

Geographic brand and what it stood for, both domestically and worldwide," says Owens. "I thought we were looking down the barrel at an amazing opportunity."

Now that he's part of that brand, Owens echoes the pronouncements that Lyle has made about his vision for the U.S. channels; specifically, a focus on character-driven programming that stays true to the brand's core programming values.

"There's a passion for exploration and adventure here and we want to add to it and invest in it," he says. "We do it in a balanced and mature way, but that doesn't mean that it can't be exciting."

Owens adds that while there will be a push towards shows that are "more populist and that resonate in a greater way with our audience," the long-standing hallmarks of Nat Geo programming – credibility and incredible access – will remain paramount concerns.

Still, the aim is revitalization; thus, moves will be made to put National Geographic Channels front of mind both for audiences and for the creative community. That will mean bolstering the ranks within. "I've found the executive gene pool here to be phenomenal," Owens says, adding that the plans are afoot for "a big expansion into the West Coast" with

moves to be announced in the coming weeks.

Also, Owens anticipates more collaboration with National Geographic Channels International, in the wake of the recent hiring of former Channel 4 head of documentaries Hamish Mykura as both exec VP and head of international content, and the London-based head of global development for NGC.

"He's a great trend picker and he's someone that gives us a creative advantage in the marketplace," says Owens of Mykura.

Owens mentions two series that could be indicative of the bolder, bigger approach NGC is looking to take in 2012 – *Wicked Tuna*, from Pilgrim Studios, which follows tuna fishers in Gloucester, Massachusetts; and *American Gypsies* from Stick Figure Productions, which focuses on a Roma family in New York City. Both will have 10-episode runs.

Owens sums up the mood at NGC as "motivated," adding: "A motivated buyer is a good buyer – it means that we're making swift decisions, need to take creative chances and are willing to do things that perhaps we weren't willing to do in the past."

"The exploration that the Society stands for is, in a way, a metaphor for the exploration we're undertaking in new talent, business and our creative model." ■■

## ▶▶ POINTED ARROW: *a producer's perspective*



BY JOHN SMITHSON

How things have changed for us English-language producers working in the American market. The U.S. remains the biggest, scariest, most exhilarating and ultimately rewarding of all TV markets. But how to crack it has evolved — there are a number of options, lots of encouraging precedents and quite a few warning signs.

As we all prepare to board the flight to Washington for the annual Realscreen Summit gathering, this yearly ritual is evidence of how things have changed.

We used to be fewer in number, the rules of the game were not clear and the opportunities were by no means obvious. There were some coproductions but much of the work revolved around the work-for-hire model (where the broadcaster keeps the rights). There were few of the major, game-changing opportunities that are now within sight of any ambitious and talented indie.

So how do you crack America?

The biggest decision is whether or not to set up shop there. It's expensive, time consuming and gives no guarantee of success. But it puts you in the face of key clients and gives you credibility, access, and keeps your ear to the ground in a fast-changing market.

If you take the plunge, the second tricky decision is where to set up your base. There's no doubt that the factual center of gravity is tilting towards the West Coast. So do you just go directly to LA or do you go to the more manageable East Coast, with its less disruptive time difference and easier travel, and set up in Washington, DC or New York? My view is to take the plunge if you are confident and go west, if the big networks are in your sights.

There is an option to stay at home but don't imagine you can run a decent U.S. business by phone and email. Nothing beats a direct face-to-face meeting. Our experience has led us to the golden rule that one of our senior creative team has to be there every six weeks.

The next dilemma: do you get an agent? Again, there is no hard and fast rule but the West Coast is an agent-driven culture, whereas the East Coast is mixed. If you are heading west, make the call. Or, more likely, take the call that will doubtless come your way.

A word of warning: it is a harsh climate. Forget the warm, welcoming UK terms of trade for indies dealing with the Brit broadcasters, or the equally indie-friendly rules in other key English-language territories. Nailing your production contract is going to be tough and can end in tears. Cash flow can be a nightmare and has given sleepless nights to many indies new to the U.S. environment. Deliverables can be a pain. Many a time we have been owed substantial money because of some missing piece of paperwork that has blocked the final production payment. No problem if you're with a super-indie but tough if you're on your own.

One final consideration to make is that although non-U.S. indies have made great inroads in the American market, recent changes have made it tougher. As networks such as Discovery, History and National Geographic Channel have evolved, their tastes have changed. Big, domestically based shows with a heavy fact-ent bias are very much in fashion, and the U.S. indies are getting the commissions. Good luck to them. It's easier for us Brits to have a toe in the U.S. market than the other way around.

After 15 years of being a very active player in the U.S. market I have no regrets. The challenge, the constant change and the sheer size of the opportunity make it irresistible. Yes, there have been hassles and a few lows, but the highs massively outweigh these. Washington, here I come.

*John Smithson is creative director of Arrow Media, a new indie he co-founded in 2011. Previously he was chief executive of Darlow Smithson Productions. ■■*

# NATPE anticipates higher numbers for 2012

BY BARRY WALSH

According to event organizers, things are heating up again when it comes to the NATPE Market and Conference.

This year's model, once again taking place at Miami's Fontainebleau Resort from January 23-25, is expected to have higher attendance from buyers and distributors, and higher attendance overall than last year's event and perhaps its highest in years, according to Jordan Levin, NATPE chairman and CEO of Generate, and Rick Feldman, president and CEO of NATPE/Content First.

In a media conference call held prior to the event, Levin and Feldman noted that registration commitments were tracking higher than last year, and that 600 buyers from more than 65 countries were slated to attend.

Last year's conference proved to be revitalizing for the market. Moving the location from Las Vegas to Miami, NATPE 2011's final numbers saw a marked increase from its predecessor. According to the organization, last year's market brought in a total of 4,850 attendees from 70 countries, which was a 35% increase from 2010. Also, 272 global exhibiting countries were represented, and 780 content buyers and acquisition execs were on hand — a 116% increase from 2010.

This year, highlights include a keynote address from Phil Kent, chairman and CEO of Turner Broadcasting System; the return of the Advertising Innovation track; and the Brandon Tartikoff Legacy Awards, which this year will honor FremantleMedia North America's Cecile Frot-Coutaz among others.

Other speakers include Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos, Electus founder Ben Silverman, Magical Elves founders Jane Lipsitz and Dan Cutforth, Original Productions' Thom Beers, and Gaspin Media head Jeff Gaspin.

NATPE will be returning to Miami in 2013, say organizers, and has an option to return in 2014. ■■

## HBO acquires *Gideon's Army*

HBO has picked up American TV rights to *Gideon's Army*, the anticipated forthcoming documentary from former A&E exec Dawn Porter.

The film, which has financial backing from the Ford Foundation, follows a number of public defenders in the U.S. during their first years of practice, showing the emotional and practical difficulties they face.

It is directed by Porter, produced by Julie Goldman and edited by Matt Hamachek. "We are wrapping up production now and expect to be done editing in the spring," Porter told *realscreen*. "It feels like all the pieces are coming together." **Adam Benzine ■■**





Werner Herzog's *Death Row: A Documentary Series in Four Parts* will premiere in Berlin

## Herzog and Macdonald premiering at Berlinale

Kevin Macdonald's *Marley*, examining the life and times of reggae legend Bob Marley, and Werner Herzog's *Death Row: A Documentary Series in Four Parts* will have their world premieres at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival in February.

The *Marley* project has seen three different helmers take the director's chair over the course of its history, with Martin Scorsese first billed to work on the project, then Jonathan Demme, and now Macdonald, director of *Touching the Void* and the recent *Life in a Day*.

Herzog's four-part *Death Row* doc series is a companion piece of sorts to his recent feature *Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life*, which had its world premiere in September at the Telluride and Toronto film fests.

The 62nd Berlin International Film Festival takes place from February 9-19. **BW** ■

## ZDF Enterprises acquisitions head retires

Juergen Steimer, senior vice president of acquisitions and coproductions for ZDF Enterprises (ZDFE), has retired.

"With his know-how in business and program content, he was an unfailing guarantee for the success of ZDF Enterprises, and thanks to his vast knowledge and expertise, he must be given credit for a large part of the successful development of the firm," said ZDF Enterprises CEO and president Alexander Coridass in a statement.

Steimer had held his position with the commercial arm of the German broadcaster since ZDFE's founding in 1993. Prior to that, from 1989 to 1992, he was head of the program acquisition and coproduction department at ZDF. He first came to the network in 1982 as a legal consultant, specializing in copyright, international law and cable distribution in other countries.

"I witnessed the founding of ZDF Enterprises and am proud that the firm has established itself as an important player on the German and international market," said Steimer.

No replacement had been announced by press time. **BW** ■

## BEST PRACTICES

*business tips from the pros*

BY CHRIS PALMER AND ANGELI GABRIEL

## HOW TO HAVE MORE SELF-DISCIPLINE

The start of a new year is often the time for taking stock, making resolutions, and looking ahead. All this takes self-discipline, which is one of the most important character strengths leading to success and fulfillment in life.

Despite the benefits of having self-discipline, it is also one of the most difficult traits to develop. Indulgences and fleeting desires can easily pull you away from making smart, healthy decisions. But by taking a few simple steps, you can gain control over your life and move closer toward greater personal fulfillment.

Some examples of how you can have more self-discipline are taking small steps toward achieving a larger goal, starting a routine to help you grow accustomed to new ways of living, listing and prioritizing tasks, and using a planner to manage those tasks and the time it takes to accomplish them. Following these steps will increase your motivation and confidence to tackle whatever life throws at you.

Nothing kills motivation more than the intimidating prospect of starting a long and arduous project. To counter this intimidation, break the project down and start small. For instance, if your goal is to eat a healthier diet, make gradual changes by replacing just one meal a day with a healthy alternative and then work your way to changing your entire diet. When you take small steps like this, large and intimidating projects will be much more manageable.

Another helpful way to have more self-discipline is to start a routine. By devoting a part of every day to accomplishing a goal, you grow accustomed to overcoming tendencies like laziness and procrastination during that particular time frame. One example is setting time aside every day to exercise. Once your body becomes accustomed to exercising each day, it will actually end up craving that activity — so what was once a tedious task becomes desirable and routine.

With so many tasks to take care of during the day, it can be very easy to be overwhelmed; however, you can combat that by creating a list of those tasks and prioritizing them. Creating a list provides a visual and more tangible representation of what needs to be accomplished, and prioritizing them allows you to gain control by first addressing the more important ones. If you have numerous projects at work, for example, write each one down and rank them according to factors such as time sensitivity. As you cross off each completed task, the list of what needed to be done becomes a fulfilling and motivating representation of accomplishments and progress.

A planner will combine the aforementioned methods of self-discipline, since it will allow you to have a running record of your "to do" lists and routines. Most importantly it will help you master a crucial element of developing self-discipline: time management. With a planner, you will learn how to schedule when certain projects need to be accomplished and how much time to devote to them.

By following these simple steps, you will be able to accomplish tasks much more quickly and efficiently. No longer will you fall victim to laziness, fear, or procrastination; instead, you become more productive, more courageous, and more in control of your life.

Chris Palmer is the director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of the Sierra Club book *"Shooting in the Wild: An Insider's Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom."* Angeli Gabriel is an anthropologist, filmmaker, and MA candidate at American University. ■





Music  
makes the  
moment.





Major sports brands are teaming up with producers and cable nets to bring sports-oriented programming to new audiences. Increasingly, these sports stories are being told through docuseries. Here, *realscreen* talks to the networks and the producers behind the current upswing in sports docs.

BY KELLY ANDERSON

It used to be the case that non-fiction sports output was limited to biopics of star athletes, or journeys following a team throughout its season. However, evolving partnerships and approaches to telling sports stories have opened up locker rooms, offering a new window on the sports world and the athletes, coaches, executives and fans within it.

Just as the natural history documentary was revitalized by event programming such as *Planet Earth*, sports organizations, production companies and networks are revisiting what a sports documentary is and what it can be. The key with this genre is tapping into a world of knowledge and access through strategic partnerships.

The most recent joint venture to enter the playing field is NHL Original Productions, launched in November. Executive producer ESPN's 2011 slate included the doc *Roll Tide/War Eagle*

Ross Greenburg, previously the president of HBO Sports, has teamed up with NHL's Content Group to develop and create long- and short-form programming for NBC Sports and the League's media assets.

"NHL Original Productions' goal is to capture the game and the players as never seen before and give the average sports fan the hook to come on in and become a fan of the NHL," says Greenburg.

NHL Original Productions is on a breakaway with its first documentary series *NHL 36*, which follows one star hockey player in the hours leading up to a game. The first episode launched on December 14 on NBC's Sports Network (formerly known as Versus).

For 36 hours straight isolated cameras and a number of microphones captured Chicago Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane's every move

prior to and during the game. The remaining nine episodes of the documentary series, currently without airdates or players attached, will each follow a different player.

"We're going to showcase not only the way the NHL works but how a player deals with the game and the day off," Greenburg says.

To further pump up the series, NBC Sports has positioned the docuseries to air the same night as a game that the particular episode's star is focused on.

Greenburg was able to gain unprecedented access to current NHL players with a major push from the league itself. John Collins, the league's COO, worked with general managers, presidents and coaches to secure the access.

"You really do need support from the top of the league, whether it's John Collins or [NHL commissioner] Gary Bettman [to] make sure

the message is sent at the [board of] governors meetings: this is important to us as a league, so please open your door."

While Greenburg and NHL Original Productions are working to create a deeper appreciation for present-day hockey games and athletes, ESPN Films has looked to the past for its inspiration. Its slate of nine non-fiction films that aired this past year on the American sports cable net have ranged from Eric Drath's *Renée*, focusing on Renée Richards, the world's first transgendered tennis player, to the season-ending *The Marinovich Project*, which focused on Todd Marinovich, the NFL player who had a spectacular rise and descent in the '90s.

Following on the success of '30 for 30,' the Peabody Award-winning documentary series which ran from 2009-10, Connor Schell, ESPN Films' vice president, says that the division's current output aims to remain identical in content and structure to what fans came to love about the series, which were "director-driven stories that really take a point of view about a unique, dramatic, tragic [and/or] inspirational story in the sports world."

The 2011 slate featured films from established documentary filmmakers Alex Gibney and Morgan Spurlock alongside up-and-coming directors, much like '30 for 30' brought in the talents of filmmakers ranging from Albert Maysles to rapper/actor Ice Cube.

"When folks like Albert Maysles, Barbara Koppel, Brett Morgen and others are turning their lenses on the sports world in thoughtful and creative ways, I absolutely believe that pushes the genre, creates new way of telling

**“When folks like Albert Maysles are turning their lenses on sports, that pushes the genre.”**

stories and ultimately elevates it," says Schell. "If you look at the films that we did this fall I think they were every bit as good for '30 for 30.' And I expect the films we do next year will be even better."

Indeed, from a ratings perspective, the



Sylvester Stallone, pictured with Chuck Wepner, subject of ESPN Films' *The Real Rocky*

trajectory for the network's sports docs appears to be an upward one. The most-watched film of the 2011 slate, *The Fab Five*, garnered more viewers than the two most viewed films of the '30 for 30' series, *Pony Exce\$\$* and *The U*. *The Fab Five*, which aired in March and focused on the University of Michigan basketball team from the 1990s,

true stories that unfold on the field and with these films, it's a great opportunity to take a step back and look a little deeper with the perspective of time," he says. "*The Marinovich Project* is a perfect example of a story that was covered one way in the early 1990s and two decades later we look at it and bring a very different perspective."

Schell also has the benefit of using the expertise of various sports league production arms. For '30 for 30,' some of the films were produced in part with NFL Films, NBA Entertainment, MLB Productions and NASCAR Media Group.

"These production entities not only have really extensive archives and expertise within their sports, they also have really talented producers on staff," he says.

Another major name in sports, consumer publication *Sports Illustrated*, recently partnered with HBO and Endgame Entertainment to produce a five-part documentary series called *Sport in America*, set to debut in 2013.

The HBO documentary series will see

earned a 2.1 rating to become the network's highest-rated documentary to date.

The 2012 slate, which will have approximately 10 documentary projects, is currently being shaped by Schell and team.

"The sports world provides such incredible



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assorted individuals, ranging from average Joes to well-known celebs, recalling a major moment in sports that touched their lives, and the reasons why it did.

Endgame's CEO James D. Stern says the project percolated years ago after a conversation with his father, in which the elder Stern recalled being in Wrigley Field in 1932 the day Babe Ruth famously "called his shot," pointing somewhere while at bat – the jury's out as to where – and then blasting a home run to center field.

Later when Stern met up with Terry McDonell, the editor-in-chief of *Sports Illustrated*, the project gained focus.

"I've always said if you talk with a cab driver about a game you've seen, on the way to meet with a CEO, the conversation with the cab driver and the one with the CEO is exactly the same," says Stern.

"So we started thinking about it in terms of a metaphor for how we as a society and culture at large see things, whether it's racially or politically, and it grew from

there," he adds.

Currently, there's an open call via SportinAmerica.com for people to submit videos telling their stories of how compelling sports moments have impacted their lives.

"I'm not interviewing Michael Jordan about a shot that he made, I'm interviewing people who watched the shot about what it meant to them and what was going on in their lives," explains Stern.


*Sports Illustrated* will help provide historical and editorial context through its writers and archives, as well as valuable marketing muscle to the documentary project.

"If your favorite player has a plane crash while he's on his way to give humanitarian aid to Nicaragua, which happened to Roberto Clemente, that's a human story," sums up Stern.

"The fact that he was a remarkable player for the Pittsburgh Pirates and that's why people were interested in him, is significant to some degree, but it's still a human story." ■

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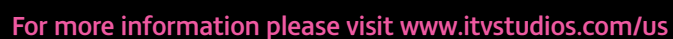
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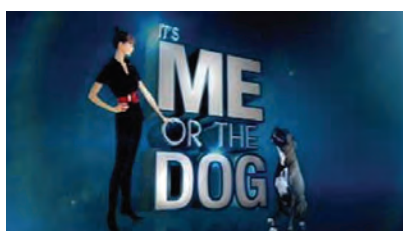








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BY KELLY ANDERSON

# CULTURE CLUB

Docuseries that immerse audiences in other cultures are generating big buzz, major controversies and, in some cases, record-breaking audiences for networks around the world.

Two of the biggest factual series of the past several years were cultural studies of a sort, following gypsies in the UK in one instance, and Italian-Americans sharing a house in a U.S. beach town in the other. Channel 4's *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* and MTV's *Jersey Shore*, respectively, were both wildly popular and hugely controversial, as they captured communities not often represented on television.

The numbers seem to indicate that audiences are keen to learn more about other cultures via factual television, especially if those cultures are colorful and somewhat outside of what's considered mainstream. *Jersey Shore* is MTV's highest-rated series to date, with an episode in January of this year racking up 8.9 million viewers and the premiere episode for season four, in which the cast was set loose in Italy,

Firecracker Films' blockbuster *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* for Channel 4 is also coming to TLC, with a U.S. version slated for later this year

attracting 8.8 million total viewers.

*Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, meanwhile, is Channel 4's highest-rated documentary series to date, averaging a whopping nine million viewers in its debut season. December's *My Big Fat Gypsy Christmas* was a gift for C4, bringing in more than five million viewers.

Firecracker Films is the London-based prodco behind *Weddings*, which has spawned a second season for C4 airing this year. The buzz has carried across the pond to TLC, which aired the original UK series and has commissioned Firecracker to produce a U.S. version.

"I think the British public had all of these misconceptions of what the gypsies are actually like," says Mark Soldering, the Santa Monica-based CEO for Firecracker. "They don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't take drugs, [there's] no sex before marriage

and divorce is unheard of. I think maybe that's why, as well as all the bling and the big dresses, it's become the phenomenon that it has."

The upcoming U.S. version for TLC also aims to change people's perceptions about gypsy and traveler culture.

"Bringing the show here, the main thing I keep coming across is that most people here have no idea there are gypsies in America. That's been the overriding reaction when we tell people we're doing this: 'What? There are gypsies here?'" he says.

Soldering says it's important to note that beyond the series' entertainment quotient, ramped up by the coverage of the extravagant weddings thrown by the participants, it aims to provide serious takeaway.

"We're documentary filmmakers at the end of





the day and we've happened to make a show that is very entertaining because of the visual feast that it offers," he says. "At the same time there are social conditions and questions raised about the culture that we like to answer.

"It's not just about the dresses for us; it's about how they celebrate life, birth, death

Amy and one son, Zach, are little people while three other children, Jeremy, Molly and Jacob, are of average height – captivated audiences for six seasons. The Roloffs still appear on the network via specials, and Winter says the unique dynamic within the family makes for "really striking" TV.

## “It's not our job to tell people what to think or how to feel about the people on our air.”

[and] how they settle their own disputes. I like to think that we've changed people's conceptions of what they thought gypsies were about."

Perhaps it's fitting that TLC picked up the UK and U.S. versions of *Gypsy Weddings* considering that the line-up for the U.S. network has featured subculture and outside-of-the-mainstream subject matter since the days of *Jon & Kate Plus 8* in 2008 and even earlier, with *Little People, Big World* in 2006.

"Here's a family much like every other kind of family where we have the same sort of trials and tribulations, life moments and milestones," says TLC general manager Amy Winter of the latter series. The story of the Roloff family – in which parents Matt and

The network continues to generate buzz with subculture series ranging from this year's *The Virgin Diaries* and *All-American Muslim* to the upcoming *Irish Dancing Tweens* (w/t).

The key challenge across all of these series, says Winter, is to always be respectful of traditions and to let the characters tell their stories.

"What's really important with our storytelling is we are documenting their lives and sharing without judgment," says Winter. "It's not our job to tell people what to think or how to feel about the people on our air but to share a really honest look at their lives."

Winter says that with such programming, the network strives to take a family or group that seems to be somehow outside of mainstream culture, and show just how

relatable it actually is.

"*All American Muslim* is a great example of that – to let people into a subculture that, as an outsider, you only perceive the differences, and then once you get that inside look, you get to see the differences, but also the really relatable qualities [between] our lives," she adds.

Despite the good intentions, *All American Muslim* has made headlines after a conservative group called the Florida Family Association pressured advertisers to pull their spots from the show, with Lowe's Home Improvement being one of the defectors. For its part, Lowe's has denied that pressure from the Florida Family Association influenced its decision to pull its advertising.

"I think it was very clear what the series was, so it was surprising," says Bravo SVP of production Shari Levine of the controversy.

Bravo is yet another American network moving into the subculture space with the upcoming *Shahs of Sunset* from Ryan Seacrest Productions. The reality series follows a group of wealthy Persian-Americans living in Los Angeles.

But Levine maintains that *Shahs* isn't the first foray into the genre for the network, citing the *Real Housewives* franchise as such.

"People think those are alien cultures that they're watching on the screen," says Levine of the assorted collections of *Housewives* on Bravo's air. "I think *Shahs* takes it a bit further than where we have before."

She finds that the most difficult part of documenting a subculture is translating

British teenagers joined Amish communities in KEO Films' *Living with the Amish* for Channel 4







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people's shared history.

"You behave with people from your own culture with a shorthand," she explains. "To a mass audience, you have to translate some of the deep history that people don't know, in a way that fills them in enough that they can follow along and understand what the dynamic is that they're watching."

Meanwhile, back in the UK, KEO Films has been actively documenting other societies, but through the lens of cultural exchange.

Most recently, KEO produced *Living with the Amish*, a documentary series that aired in December on Channel 4. In the six-episode series, a British cast of eight teenagers joined Amish and Mennonite families in the States to live in their world of gas lamps, horses and carts, manual labor and daily communal hymn-singing.

"We very much believe that this type of cultural exchange is creating a new genre which we call reverse anthropology – using another culture as a way of reflecting back on our own," says KEO Films' head of development and series EP Katie Buchanan.

This is the third "reverse anthropology" program from the prodco after 2007's *Meet the Natives*, where tribesmen from the South Pacific stayed with British families. That series was also adapted for the U.S. In 2010, KEO produced *Amish: World's Squarest Teenagers*, also for Channel 4, in which Amish teenagers resided with British families.

“Rather than trying to engineer conflict, we’re also asking questions about our values.”

"[This is the] first to immerse British teenagers in other cultures," says Buchanan of the most recent series. "Rather than simply trying to engineer conflict, we are also asking questions about our values and the way we live."

This cultural exchange, however, faced the same primary challenge that all other subculture programming faces – gaining access to a typically closed community.

Relationships with the participants were built up over months, and the premise of the



The Jaafar family, featured in TLC's *All-American Muslim* (Photo by Adam Rose, courtesy of TLC)

series was explained to them in detail. In total, the KEO team spent a year gaining access.

"Before filming we showed people the cameras so they were familiar with them," says Buchanan of the non-obtrusive production methods employed. "The production team was kept to a minimum at all times and filmed from a distance. We used radio mics and table mics rather than overhead booms. The series

before the Amish agreed to take part in the show: it couldn't air in the U.S.

"[With] the Amish, sometimes if you do things that are a little bit under the radar, people don't mind so much," says Buchanan of the agreement. "If [they] feel like you're rubbing everyone's noses in it, that becomes a bit more of an issue."

"They really felt quite bruised by films in the past that have looked at Rumspringa [the period in adolescence in which some Amish youth may enter into a wider social world prior to deciding whether to join the church through baptism] and 'teenagers running wild.' What appealed to them was that this was about helping our young people and that our young people could learn from them. I think it was a very positive reflection of their values," she adds.

Like other subculture series producers, Buchanan feels that *Living with the Amish* helped its audience reflect on its own values by juxtaposing them with those belonging to another culture.

"[We're] reflecting back on our values when we're questioning a lot of things because of the current economic situation of this country," she says. "The time is quite right to look at the Amish values and lack of materialism and consumerism, rather than just on the individual." ■

was shot with overhead light on the Canon 305, a small HDV camera."

She adds that it helped that the main focus of the program was the British teenagers and what they were taking from the experience; thus, the vast majority of filming was done observationally, or through testimony from the teenagers. Interviews with the Amish were kept to a bare minimum, and focused on discussion of their beliefs and their responses to the teens.

Still, an interesting condition had to be met



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Last November's IDFA Forum offered commissioners a sneak peek at more than 50 hot international documentaries currently in development or production. Here, *realscreen* highlights four of the most impressive projects showcased at the Amsterdam event.

BY ADAM BENZINE

# Onestowatch

Van Nieuwenhuyzen



Last November saw the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) hosting the 19th edition of its annual IDFA Forum, at which a host of new and established directors unveiled their latest doc projects to a panel of international TV commissioning editors, in a bid to coax out funding for an international coproduction.

Among the event's notable recent success stories, this year's Sundance opener – Lauren Greenfield's *The Queen of Versailles* – was pitched at the Forum in 2010; Michael Collins's *Give Up Tomorrow* was pitched in 2009; and both *Bobby Fischer Against the World* from Liz Garbus and Steve James's *The Interrupters* were pitched in 2008.

Adriek van Nieuwenhuyzen, head of IDFA's industry office and overseer of the IDFA Forum, says she and her team aim to have pitches that are "a mixture of real TV-style documentaries" and films which "also have theatrical potential, like *The Interrupters*."

Of the 21 projects pitched at the 2011 Forum's Central Pitch, *realscreen* offers its take on the four projects most likely to make it to TV screens over the next few years.

## *I Will Be Murdered*

(director: Justin Webster)

This twist-filled, BBC 'Storyville'-backed film looks at a respected corporate attorney

in Guatemala, who was assassinated while cycling outside his office in 2009. Just before he was killed, he recorded a video message related to his own impending death and the death of his lover, which subsequently goes viral online.

Claire Aguilar, ITVS' VP of programming, was among those complimenting the project, calling it "a fascinating story, compellingly told," while Tribeca Film Institute director of documentary programming Ryan Harrington also paid praise, telling the pitch team, "I can see Tribeca getting behind this easily."

## *No Burqas Behind Bars*

(director: Nima Sarvestani)

Trumpeting fantastic access, Sarvestani's doc takes viewers inside an Afghan women's prison to introduce us to women who have been sentenced for a range of "moral crimes," such as running away from their husbands (10 years) and cheating on their husbands (12 years).

Though the trailer for the project offered the occasional chuckle, it was for the most part somber and interesting. Catherine Olsen, exec producer of docs for Canada's CBC Newsworld, led the praise for the project, saying, "I was feeling some saturation with the subject of Afghanistan, but the women's stories were really moving."

## *Happiness*

(director: Thomas Balmès)

The latest project from Balmès, the director of box office hit *Babies*, focuses on an eight-year-old boy living in Bhutan, the last nation on Earth to get television. In 2012, his 900-population village will finally gain electricity and television.

YLE's head of coproduction Erkki Astala was among the positive responders to the pitch, saying, "the great thing about anthropological films by filmmakers like Thomas is that eventually they will tell us about ourselves."

## *Teenage*

(director: Matt Wolf)

Based on author Jon Savage's acclaimed book of the same name, *Teenage* looks at the history of youth culture, drawing a line from the party-crazed Flappers and hipster Swing Kids of the early 20th Century, through to the Nazi Youth and the later development of the modern day teenager.

The project features splendid archive footage, with Guy Lavie, channel manager for Yes Docu, telling Wolf he found his vision for the project "very promising." Also enthusiastic was VPRO's Barbara Truyen, who said that while she doesn't normally "do history projects," she was won over and would be committing to this one. ■■





# Freeze frames

To earn one's stripes as an explorer, one has to possess both a hunger for discovery and a flair for technology. We see this in the legendary work of Captain Robert Falcon Scott's official photographer, Herbert Ponting, who carted his then-state-of-the-art cinematograph on Scott's ultimately ill-fated Antarctic expedition aboard the *Terra Nova*.

We also see it in the exploits of the producers and scientists behind *Frozen Planet*, the epic seven-part series that recently, in its Sir David Attenborough-narrated form, garnered huge ratings for the BBC in the UK – with its second episode racking up just under 10 million viewers – and is set to debut in the U.S. on Discovery Channel on March 18.

A sequel of sorts to the landmark natural history event series *Planet Earth*, *Frozen Planet* heads to the polar regions to capture animal behaviors in some of the most inhospitable locations on our planet. And while Scott and Ponting may have seen some of these behaviors during what came to be known as “the worst journey in the world,” it took close to a century to comprehensively film a select few.

Vanessa Berlowitz, *Planet Earth* veteran, *Frozen Planet* series producer and producer/director for its first episode, points to one such behavior that almost proved to be Ponting's end when he'd encountered it but, thankfully, proved less of a danger for *Frozen Planet*'s team. The phenomenon known as wave washing – in which orcas launch a coordinated attack against seals by creating waves in the ocean that will propel the prey off ice floes – had been observed by Ponting, and then by scientists years later, but the *Frozen Planet* crew wanted to document the behavior from multiple

vantage points. Thus, a “megashoot” approach was mapped out, in which cameras were mounted on boats for stabilizing long-lens shots as well as military helicopters for aerial footage, and underwater divers armed with camera-mounted poles took to the frigid waters.

“We were extremely lucky,” she says. “I think it was the unique combination of having two orca scientists on board that satellite-tagged a pod of orcas so we could follow them, and having a double shift of skippers so they could sail day and night.”

The series – coproduced by the BBC's Natural History Unit, Discovery Channel, and the Open University with Germany's ZDF, Discovery Channel Canada, Spain's Antena 3 and Greece's Skai TV – lays claim to numerous filming firsts and notable accomplishments which are, as Berlowitz tells it, the results of experience, technological advancement, drive and yes, pure luck.

One example of a filming first that effectively marries these four components is the capturing of the “brinicle,” a nine-foot-long stalactite that forms underwater and then plunges to the seabed, fatally stabbing anything in its path. The diving team had seen some forming under the ice in McMurdo Sound but had to resurface as their dive time was up – thus, if they were to attempt to capture another as it reformed, they would be, as Berlowitz says, “right up against the clock.”

“I think that was a testament to the patience and resourcefulness of the teams that we work with,” she says. “This cameraman [Hugh Miller] was designing the time-lapse kit literally all through the night the night before.”

BY BARRY WALSH

Upon its airing in the UK, the epic seven-part natural history series *Frozen Planet* generated much heat in its ratings, racking up more than nine million viewers for one episode. As Discovery Channel in the U.S. prepares to bring the series to its airwaves in March, *realscreen* bundles up and takes a look behind the scenes.

Electron microscopes outfitted with an HD camera captured the detail of a snowflake as it formed (Discovery Channel/BBC)



028 A mother polar bear and cubs (Photo: Discovery/BBC)

Berlowitz says other major pieces of kit – including the Cineflex camera systems she’d helped pioneer the use of in *Planet Earth* and motion control systems used for time-lapse photography – needed to be upgraded to withstand the rigors of -60C temperatures.

The Cineflex was made smaller and “winterized,” while UK motion control company Kontrol Freax devised a rugged system, dubbed the Aurora, that could be transported on sleds but would give camera operators the ability to shoot motion paths repeatedly over stretches of time.

“That’s what’s great about the partnership with the BBC,” says Discovery Channel VP of production Christine Weber. “Not only are they great ‘idea people,’ the partnership allows us the time and budgets you need to create these programs, and they also have a team of people who are constantly working on the technology and new ways to shoot this stuff.”

Berlowitz admits that even though she and executive producer Alastair Fothergill had experience dealing with polar conditions – she with *Planet Earth* and he via *Life in the Freezer*

– it was still, at seven months in the field in total, her most challenging shoot thus far.

Berlowitz cites the four months spent by cameramen Jeff Wilson and Mark Smith, filming Adelie penguins from a hut stationed in Antarctica, as perhaps the most challenging shoot of the series. Hurricane force winds of 130 miles an hour routinely batter the landscape, and during one particularly fierce storm, “large pieces of the hut just flew away.”

“We have some footage they shot that we’ve not broadcast because we don’t feel it’s appropriate, but the storm was so severe that they filmed pieces for their wives,” recalls Berlowitz. “That’s about as hardcore as it gets.”

While the overwhelming majority of the series is constructed from such rigorous shoots, a sequence involving the birth of a polar bear cub elicited controversy in the UK press. In the sequence, a polar bear gives birth to its young in a controlled environment – in this case, a zoo in the Netherlands. Sir David Attenborough’s narration does not mention the specific circumstances, which was enough to raise the ire of some members of the British

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press, even though the narration was carefully worded to refer to polar bears generally, and the BBC had posted a web clip of the production team building the shoot's special den prior to the broadcast of the episode.

"Everything that was done under controlled conditions was rigorously examined," maintains Berlowitz. "Could it be shot in the wild? Was it ethical to do so? Was it feasible and editorially valid to shoot it?"

"We felt it was editorially very important to show it, but clearly you can't film that in the wild without killing the cub – the mother would probably abandon it – or without the mother coming out and killing you," she continues, adding that the BBC has received "a tidal wave" of support via social media since the story first emerged, and that such scrutiny is "an inevitable byproduct of success."

Indeed, one thing that is indisputable is the success of the series. For Discovery's part, Weber says there will be a comprehensive social media strategy leading up to the March premiere, as the social media conversations surrounding the show during its UK airing



A grey wolf with pup in Canada's Ellesmere Island (Photo: Discovery Channel/BBC/Jeff Turner/naturepl.com)

were "off the charts, and we think that contributed to the ratings success."

While Berlowitz enjoyed some time off prior to the holidays, she knows it won't be long before development ramps up for what will be "the next big thing." But with each event series such as *Frozen Planet* being bigger and bolder

than its predecessor, the question always emerges – what can you do for an encore?

"We've made it harder and harder on ourselves, so we only have ourselves to blame," she says with a laugh. "But at the same time I never cease to be amazed by the new stories that the natural world offers up."

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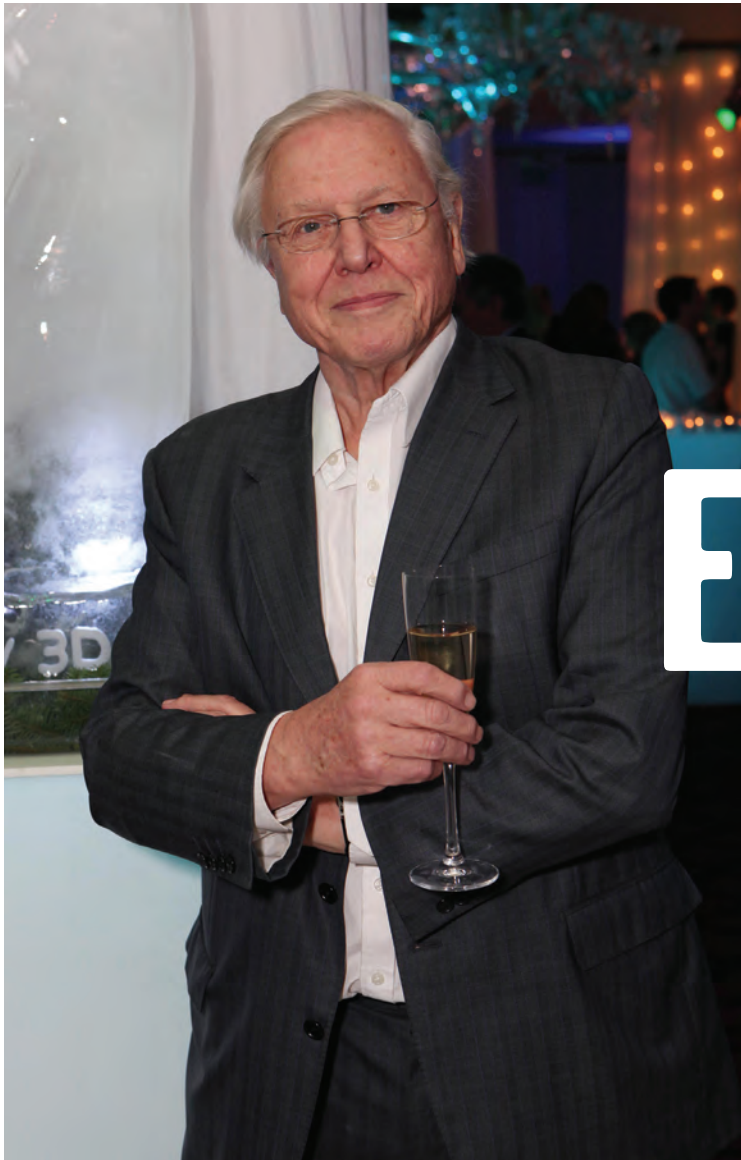
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# The Explorer

BY MONISHA RAJESH

This year sees wildlife icon Sir David Attenborough celebrate his 60th year in broadcasting. *Realscreen* was able to have an audience with Attenborough as he discussed his latest forays, both 3D and “frozen,” in natural history television.

Last year saw the legendary Sir David Attenborough breaking new ground by teaming with Atlantic Productions to create the BAFTA award-winning *Flying Monsters 3D* for UK broadcaster Sky.

Now the two have reunited to produce *The Bachelor King 3D*, featuring king penguins, which premiered on Sky 3D in the UK on New Year's Eve, with plans for a 2012 theatrical run.

After the success of *Flying Monsters*, which also saw theatrical release, both Attenborough and Atlantic CEO Anthony Geffen wanted to push the boundaries of 3D and follow one set of creatures in a controlled way.

“You’re shooting in high resolution with very few cameras and no zoom lenses, so you have to be very close to everything you shoot,” Attenborough explains. “We needed to have a

subject that would not be shy or frightened by the presence of people. Penguins don’t care, they just stand there.”

“Each 3D camera weighs 56 kg, requires four people to carry it and a crew of 14 to operate it, so we needed to choose subjects that would adapt,” adds Geffen.

The film, which was shot over a five-month period on the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia, documents the progress of a king penguin from adolescence, through courtship and eventually to fatherhood – with a number of trials and tribulations along the way.

Attenborough has recently drawn consolidated viewing figures of some 11 million for his BBC series *Frozen Planet*, a number that humbles the man who this year marks his 60th year in broadcasting. (For more on *Frozen Planet*, see page 27.)

“They were gigantic figures,” he marvels.

“In this day and age, when the audience is so divided between such a multitude of channels, to have those figures is just extraordinary.

“With regards to the last [episode, which focused on climate change], which had a very serious message – to get that many people watching astonished me.”

Despite having covered almost all corners of the Earth, Attenborough declares that he always learns something new and, if given the chance, would like to retrace his steps with the new technology available.

“While shooting *Frozen Planet*, the marvelous thing to my eyes was the use of the Cineflex mount, which allows you to take shots from a helicopter high above the ground,” he says.

“You can’t use long lenses from a helicopter because they would vibrate too much. But the

Sir David Attenborough at the Sky 3D launch for *The Bachelor King 3D*

“ I rather wonder whether there is going to be a successor... These days there’s no real need for a presenter. ”

crew also had the bright idea of putting the mount in a blown-up rubber boat and sailing across rough water.

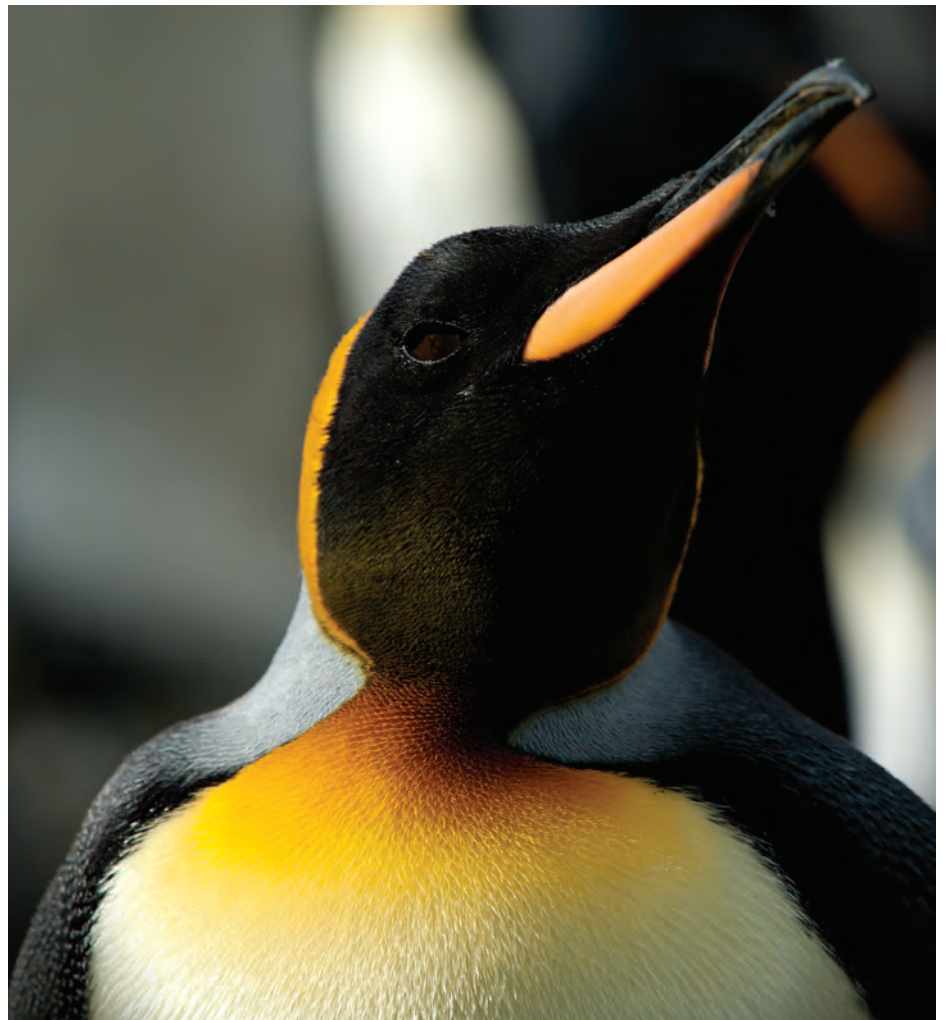
“If it wasn’t for that we would never have got those extraordinary shots of the killer whales knocking the seals off ice floes.”

Attenborough is currently on a break from writing narration for his next collaboration with Atlantic Productions, *Kingdom of Plants 3D*. The three-part series was shot over a period of a year entirely on location at London’s Kew Gardens using new technology, and will air later this year.

It included placing pinhead and periscope cameras inside plants in conjunction with time-lapse and night time footage.

“I think it’s going to be the most sensational 3D series I’ve told,” he says. “Close-ups of flowers and buds opening in 3D are simply magical. You’re transfixed and your jaw sags. Until you see it, you can’t know how wonderful it is.

“They are so beautiful and spellbinding and I



A king penguin surveys its kingdom, from *The Bachelor King 3D* (Copyright: Atlantic Productions; photo by Oskar Ström)

suspect it will be a series that will have a very long shelf life.”

Geffen and Attenborough seem unable to break their bond and are about to travel to the Galapagos Islands for what will be their fourth collaboration.

The series will tell the story of how the islands were formed by volcanoes and how animals first arrived from South America and adapted in order to survive.

The experience of both surface and underwater filming gained from *The Bachelor King 3D* will appear again in the filming of *Galapagos* – as will Attenborough, who remained off-screen for *The Bachelor King 3D*.

“You can take a jolly great camera and put it alongside marine iguanas and giant tortoises and albatross, without them taking much notice, so it’s an ideal place to film in 3D,” Attenborough explains.

If that wasn’t enough, he and Atlantic Productions have one further project in the pipeline: a second series of *First Life*.

The two-part series aired in November 2010 on BBC2 in the UK and as a two-part special on Discovery Channel in the U.S. The new series, with no firm airdate as of yet, will be a move away from 3D for the team.

“The first series concentrated on crustaceans and trilobites and how they emerged on land 300 million years ago,” Attenborough explains.

“What we are looking at is how fish developed in the sea, then moved onto land and became reptiles and amphibians and then mammals,” he says. “It will be based on the fossils of animals that don’t exist anymore so it will involve a lot of computer imaging.”

At the age of 85, Attenborough also has cause to muse over the likelihood of a new face taking the helm in natural history presenting. “I rather wonder whether there is going to be a successor,” he says.

“The role of a presenter was created at a time when television was all live and these days, there is no real need for a presenter. I suspect that it should just wither on the vine.” ■■



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This year, the Sundance Film Festival is taking on the big issues. Here, senior festival programmer David Courier discusses the docs headed to Park City that are aiming to be the definitive films on a host of major topics including healthcare, the economy, and the war on drugs. BY ADAM BENZINE

# THINKING BIG

Wondering what to expect from the Sundance Film Festival in 2012?

"If ever there was a year of the huge, comprehensive film on a given subject, this is it," says the festival's senior programmer David Courier. "We've had years where there have been a lot more films about smaller, more intimate subjects, but this year, man, it's the year of the big, definitive film."

The 28th edition of the annual Utah event, which this year runs from January 19-29, received more than 1,700 doc submissions for 2012, of which just 37 have made the cut.

Nevertheless, because Courier and his team screen so many docs at such a key time of year, they are able to get a feel for major trends.

"When we see four or five documentaries about the same topic, clearly that is in the zeitgeist," he explains, "but because we have to choose so few films, we always end up inevitably choosing the one that we think is the best. So although it doesn't end up being an actual trend in the festival, we're certainly aware of what is on people's minds."

Here, Courier picks five hot tickets screening in competition in the U.S. documentary category, each of which tackles a major issue in a big way.

## *The House I Live In*

(director: Eugene Jarecki)

Jarecki's four-years-in-the-works epic offers a wide-ranging examination of America's war on drugs, covering an ambitious spectrum of interviewees, from lawyers and journalists to junkies and judges, in a bid to become the definitive U.S. film on the subject. If ever there was a hot doc ticket for Sundance 2012, this is it.

"This is one destined for history," says Courier. "I think it's his great masterwork, and one of the best documentaries I've ever seen in my life."

"It hits you both in the head and the heart — intellectually,

the thesis of this film is absolutely brilliant, but the humanity of it is just gut-wrenching," he explains. "It engages your brain and moves you to tears at the same time. It also is not a doomsday film at all; it is filled with hope and it has so much impact for positive change."

## *The Queen of Versailles*

(director: Lauren Greenfield)

The opening day U.S. documentary follows a wealthy American couple whose plans to build a 90,000 sq. ft. palace are impacted by the economic crisis.

"If there was ever a film that works on every level, this is it," says Courier. "On a socioeconomic level, the filmmaker struck documentary gold. She went in to make one movie about the building of the largest house in America, and then the economic crisis happened, and her documentary took a turn she never expected."

## *Finding North*

(directors: Lori Silverbush and Kristi Jacobson)

The hunger crisis in the U.S. forms the focus of *Finding North*, a documentary looking at the vast number of Americans who do not have enough to eat, despite the country's problems with obesity.

"It's shocking," says Courier. "One in six Americans does not have enough to eat. And people will find that hard to believe, but the film provides visual, tangible evidence that hunger and obesity go hand in hand."

"It's also an incredibly moving film because it unveils the human stories behind hunger in America. It's not just barraging us with statistics — there's a single mom who can't afford meals for her kid, and she's a remarkable character. It's another film that hits you in the gut and also in the head."



Courier

## *Escape Fire*

(directors: Matthew Heineman and Susan Froemke)

Heineman and Froemke's doc looks at America's healthcare crisis, and the forces attempting to keep the industry as a profit-driven system. Courier says his team "saw four or five films about the American healthcare system and what is wrong with it," of which four were quite good.

"And then this one came around," he says. "This film takes what is great about each of those other films and puts it all together into one movie, becoming the comprehensive, definitive film on American healthcare and what can be done to save it."

"It gets into the human stories behind it all, and the forces trying to maintain the status quo. I think Washington needs to see this film, desperately."

## *How to Survive a Plague*

(director: David France)

France's emotional film tells the story of the intensive efforts by a group of mostly HIV-positive gay activists that helped turn AIDS from being a death sentence into a manageable condition. The doc was pitched to commissioners at last year's Hot Docs Forum in Toronto, where it was extremely well-received.

"The archival footage in this is just remarkable, but how David uses that archival footage is also pretty remarkable," says Courier. "He basically puts the viewer in the front seat of everything that is happening, so you feel like you're there."

"What you're left with is like a primer for activism today. If ever people want to learn how to do things, like the Occupy movement, this could be their primer."

"This is how to get things done when you really have to. And the film is incredibly moving, as you can imagine." ■



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Last year, *realscreen* introduced its year-end Trailblazers report, a feature designed to celebrate the achievements of risk-takers from across the non-fiction content spectrum. This year, we're shining the spotlight on even more trailblazers, ranging from network presidents to webdoc directors, and from prodco MDs to maverick commissioners. Of course, several of 2010's trailblazers continued to go from strength to strength in 2011, so you'll see their accomplishments recognized here as well.

# TRAILBLAZERS 2011



## ABBE RAVEN ► PRESIDENT & CEO, A+E NETWORKS

It's an extreme understatement to say that A+E Networks has come quite a long way since 1982, when Abbe Raven, fresh from working in theater, came to what was then known as Daytime & Arts as a production assistant.

Its 10 networks air in 150 countries, in more than 350 million homes. History, which Raven helped launch in 1995, is now a top five primetime cable network in the U.S. And A&E also wrapped up another strong year in 2011, with such non-fiction series as *Storage Wars* and its spin-off, *Storage Wars: Texas*, setting ratings records for the net. But while many journalists are quick to cite the big fact ent success stories, such as *Storage Wars* and History's *Pawn Stars*, Raven says the explosive growth of A+E Networks isn't the result of finding "lightning in a bottle."

"To me it comes down to having a great team in place that knows what our audiences want and delivers it to them," she says. "One or two shows is lighting in a bottle but to have over 15 of the top 50 shows in all of cable in our portfolio is having the right team in place, who work with the very best in the creative community. I like to think that we have been successful because we have taken big risks and that they have paid off in a big way."

This past year saw an internal shuffle of programming execs that brought former History SVP David McKillop to A&E, and A&E EVP Rob Sharenow to Lifetime, with Dirk Hoogstra upped to head History's programming. It was a move that Raven says was designed to "encourage creativity and share brand experiences."

"Myself, [A&E & Bio president and general manager] Bob

DeBitetto, [History and Lifetime president and general manager] Nancy Dubuc and my entire management have worked together a long time and that stability combined with giving people new challenges and responsibilities has really paid off," Raven says. "Everyone across our company is invested in our brands and programming."

With Lifetime poised to unveil a rebranding of sorts under Dubuc in the new year, Raven says growing the net is "certainly our top goal," and she's confident that it will make strides in 2012. "Lifetime has a great team in place and very strong development in the pipeline, and I am excited for 2012 and what's ahead," she says. Other top priorities: keeping History and A&E in the top five for adults, further international expansion and more moves in multi-platform.

**You're coming up to 30 years at A+E Networks. What are your thoughts on how it's evolved over those years?**

When I started with this company we had one network. Today we have 10 in 150 countries around the world in over 350 million homes. The growth of our business is nothing more than extraordinary.

To see the success our team has created has been so rewarding, especially since we have become a top tier cable group. Every day that I come to work is a new adventure. This past fall, we launched History in India to over 50 million people and within a month it became the number one pay channel in the market. I experience that type of energy every day and it is exhilarating! **Barry Walsh**



“Discovery is going to build on its brand equity. You’re going to see even more big shows in the science and history categories.”

## EILEEN O’NEILL ► GROUP PRESIDENT, *DISCOVERY & TLC NETWORKS*

Last year was ripe for restructuring at Discovery Communications, with Eileen O’Neill, formerly the president and GM of TLC, named group president of Discovery Channel and TLC in January.

At the time, Discovery Communications president and CEO David Zaslav made sure to mention O’Neill’s “big, bold swings at TLC,” which, he added, “have transformed the network and driven it into the top 10 for women with an incredible 31 series averaging more than one million viewers in 2010.

“We’re so proud and privileged to have Eileen at this company and I am confident her leadership will drive our biggest engines — Discovery Channel and TLC — to even greater success,” he summed up. In August, O’Neill was given oversight of another Discovery Communications net, Discovery Fit & Health.

In the past year under O’Neill’s watch, Discovery Channel launched a live event, *American Chopper Live: The Build-Off*, which revved up big ratings and took its night as the number one primetime program among males 25-54, 18-49 and 18-34. The special also proved to be a strong lead-in for the debut of *Moonshiners*, which pulled in 2.83 million total viewers for its premiere.

The ambitious, multi-year ‘Curiosity’ strand also kicked off this year, and O’Neill also points to *American Guns* as another new entry that did well for Discovery. “It was exciting growing shows like *MythBusters* and *Sons of Guns*, [both] big successes for the year,” she says, while also pointing to the four Emmys won by one of the network’s biggest hits of recent years, *Deadliest Catch*. Modestly, she points out that she takes no claim for the Emmys, but makes sure to say that “we’re proud of the team.”

With TLC, O’Neill cites the momentum of *Sister Wives*’ third season — “its biggest season ever,” she points out — and the launching of *Long Island Medium*, *Say Yes to the Dress: Bridesmaids* and “the rather buzzy” *All-American Muslim* as highlights.

### What do you consider to be your biggest accomplishment of 2011?

I think growing Discovery’s ratings and doing that through restructuring the team and maintaining TLC’s momentum. [It’s] definitely juggling a lot of balls.

### What were the biggest challenges of the past year?

For me, getting to know Discovery, having been here for 20 years and [having] not worked on that brand in 19 [of those years]. It was getting used to male programming when I’d been in the very female-skewing TLC world for a number of years.

We’ve grown some of our LA presence and structure, which is helpful and will prove even more helpful as time goes forward.

Getting to know another 80-plus team is probably my biggest challenge this year, but I also took on Discovery Fit & Health in August.

### How will the programming evolve over the course of the next year on the networks?

Discovery is going to build on its brand equity. You’re going to see even more big shows in the science and history categories, as well as the character-based shows. I think really taking advantage of our ‘Curiosity’ brand is going to be a big part of who we are next year. [2012] is going to be kicked off very strongly by *Frozen Planet*, which launches in March.

TLC has had a unique opportunity to build on some of the freshman series from this year, like *Long Island Medium*. I think there’s a lot of growth ahead for all three networks, at different stages. We’ve got the big brand of Discovery, which is having its biggest fourth quarter ever, from the looks of it. TLC is maintaining a lot of momentum and Fit & Health is about to take off. 2012 should be a very exciting year for us.

**Kelly Anderson**



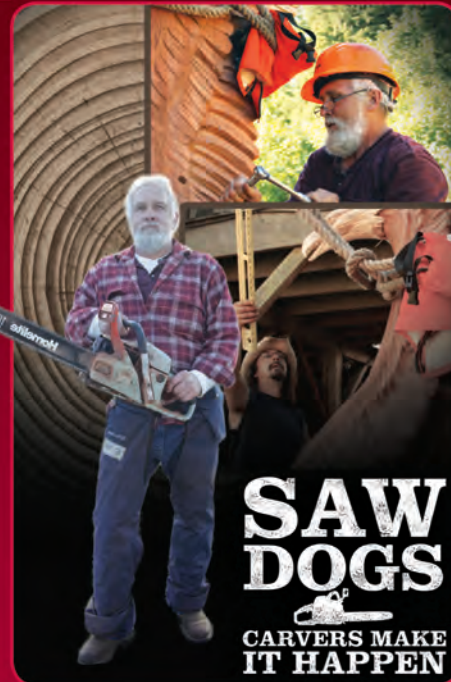
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## FRANCES BERWICK ► PRESIDENT, *BRAVO AND STYLE MEDIA*

2011 was a year to remember for Frances Berwick for several reasons. It marked her 15th year with U.S. cable net Bravo, and also gave her more responsibility within the NBCUniversal cable family, as president of both Bravo Media and Style Media.

The year also came in as Bravo's sixth "best year ever" in a row, with the *Top Chef* and *Real Housewives* net notching up an 8% year-over-year increase in adults 18-49, placing it just outside the top 10 U.S. cable networks for the demo, at number 12.

"I'm very happy when I look back from five or six years ago when we were a top 30 network," she tells *realscreen*. "I think we've managed to transition from being a television network to being an entertainment brand with a lot of traction on our other platforms."

While those other platforms are gaining increasing importance for the television industry at large, Bravo has proven itself to be a leader in both cultivating and growing an engaged audience through savvy social media strategies, promoting interactivity between

audience and talent, and developing multi-platform brand extensions that actually make good on the promise of transmedia. Berwick cites *Top Chef: Last Chance Kitchen* as a prime example: in the Toyota-sponsored webisode series, produced by *Top Chef* prodco Magical Elves, eliminated chefs face off against each other for the opportunity to come back to the TV show for its on-air finale.

"There's been a lot of focus in the industry on driving viewers from TV to mobile or from TV to online. [Here] we've shown that we can drive viewers backwards and forwards," says Berwick. "You're still able to follow *Top Chef* as a linear TV experience but you get the added thing of following this extra storyline that will affect the outcome of the television show."

Berwick says part of the recipe for strengthening the Bravo and Style brands calls for fully understanding their audiences, and study of audience segmentation has been a priority for Bravo for several years. Those segments include the oft-mentioned



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“ We’ve managed to transition from being a television network to being an entertainment brand with a lot of traction on our other platforms. ”

“PTA Trendsetters” and “Will and Gracers,” but also now include such buckets as “Metro Competitors,” a male-skewing, upscale set that loves competition shows; the “Newborn Grownups,” comprised of the 20-somethings just out of college and embarking on new lives on their own; and the “Better Me” types, which prefer aspirational programming, a segment also aggressively targeted by Discovery Communications’ Oprah Winfrey Network.

“We like our audience segmentation jargon, but it does work for us and it readily speaks to the audiences we’re going after,” Berwick says.

“I’m never quite sure what the balance of ‘science to gut’ is but we’ve been very fortunate in our high

batting average and we have very talented teams on both sides creating these shows,” she adds.

**What are your plans for original programming on both brands for 2012?**

[For Bravo] we grew an additional 20% of original programming hours in 2011, and we’re on track to drive that up to another 25% increase for next year. The reasons are obvious: number one, it’s working. And what we’re increasingly finding is, the brand is the originals. So for us it’s all about reducing the acquired content that doesn’t really speak to the brand.

The same is true for Style. We have an educated audience there which is very involved. We’re building

up to just under a million Twitter followers and that’s a vast audience that’s hungry for more information about fashion and beauty.

**Part of what defines Bravo as a brand is its attention to multi-platform engagement. Why has that been a priority?**

The value of second screen is really about creating an urgency to view and encouraging people to not wait a week before watching something on their DVRs. The whole notion of social TV — where you’re having people interact on another platform during the actual show — that’s all helping appointment viewing.

**BW ■**

043

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# PEAK PERFORMANCES



Photo: Rahoul Ghose

## NANCY DUBUC ► PRESIDENT, GENERAL MANAGER, HISTORY & LIFETIME NETWORKS

As one of *realscreen's* picks for last year's Trailblazers report, Dubuc, president and general manager for A-E Networks' History and Lifetime brands, summed up company philosophy like so: "One of our favorite phrases here is that we're in the business of 'best year ever.'" Thus, she can't be disappointed with the results of 2011, which saw History climb into the top five in primetime among all U.S. cable networks — up from number eight last year. The net saw such recent hits as *Pawn Stars*, *American Pickers* and *Swamp People* remain strong, while other programs such as the Emmy-winning *Gettysburg* and its first competition series, *Top Shot*, performed well.

2011 did present challenges, with the decision to turf History's first foray into scripted programming, the miniseries *The Kennedys*, generating chatter in the early part of the year (the project aired on Reelz Channel in early April). Elsewhere,

Nielsen's year-end numbers saw Lifetime down 11% from 2010 in the adults 18-49 demographic.

Still, History's ongoing momentum remains a major story, and programming announced for next year, including a *Pawn Stars* spin-off dubbed *Cajun Pawn Stars*, and another move into scripted via the Kevin Costner vehicle *Hatfield and McCays*, are bound to get buzz. And look for a Lifetime rebrand to intensify in 2012: at last summer's Factual Entertainment Forum presented by *realscreen*, Dubuc said the female-skewing net's makeover was "still in its infancy" at that point, but she firmly believed in Lifetime's potential — through its mix of movies, drama and unscripted — to be a "triple threat."

"Even today when you have a network that's as on fire as History is, I'd say the lion's share of our meetings are all about what's next — how are we going to do more," she said last year. Odds are not much has changed since then. **BW**



## DAVID ZASLAV ► CEO, DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS

Discovery Communications has come a long way from the launch of its inaugural Discovery Channel in 1985. The company now has more than 1.5 billion subscribers in 210 territories worldwide, with some 36 businesses and brands in its portfolio.

As such, CEO David Zaslav's key achievement in 2011 has been in steering this massive organization, and keeping the train planted firmly on the track, as it continues to grow across the globe. While its U.S. ratings gains in 2011 have not been as notable as some of its cable competitors (with the exception of ID), its international expansion has been considerable — the completion of TLC's international roll-out and the meeting of its 100 million household target last year being particularly noteworthy.

And, while the efforts are still nascent, Zaslav does deserve credit from the factual community for Discovery Communications' newest joint venture channels — 3net

and OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network — as well as for the new male-skewing channel Velocity, a rebrand from Discovery HD Theater.

While the JV nets are still undoubtedly finding their feet, they have nevertheless become welcome new homes for producers. OWN, in particular, has given a much-needed presence on U.S. TV to the serious feature-length doc via its 'Documentary Club' strand, as well as another avenue for female-skewing reality series.

All of this has been carried out with Discovery Communications still bringing in considerable money — it most recently recorded a Q2 profit of US\$254 million, up 20% on the year-ago period, and no mean feat in a still rough economy.

For 2012, the firm's key objectives will be to make gains in the ratings of its domestic portfolio while maintaining its impressive international expansion. **Adam Benzine**



Numerous trailblazers featured in last year's report also kicked considerable hind-quarters in 2011. Here's a look at those from the Trailblazing Class of 2010 who continued to turn in peak performances over the past year.



### THOM BEERS ► CEO, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, *ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS*

A quick glance at our informal readers' survey at the close of this issue (page 76) reveals that unscripted TV's king of testosterone TV, Original Productions' president and exec producer Thom Beers, has caught lightning in a bottle once more with A&E's *Storage Wars*.

Several of our participants in our year-end round-up named the program as their favorite factual series of the past year, and the numbers show that many Americans feel the same way: *Storage Wars* is the network's top-rated non-fiction show, with its second season premiere in July setting a ratings record for the net, bringing in 5.1 million total viewers.

Also on the *Storage Wars* front, a spin-off series, *Storage Wars: Texas*, premiered in early December and made a similar splash, pulling in 4.1 million total viewers and becoming the highest-rated original series launch on the net to date.

This past year also saw one of Beers' other big series, Discovery's *Deadliest Catch*, snare four Emmys, including one for outstanding reality series, and nods for cinematography, picture editing and sound mixing.

While not everything Beers touched reeled in *Deadliest Catch*-sized ratings in 2011, the success of *Storage Wars* and its offspring proves that Beers and company still have the touch when it comes to gritty-yet-engrossing factual entertainment. "I'm pretty good at sensing what's out there and what people are thinking about," he told us last year, and we're interested to see what that sixth sense picks up on for the year ahead, especially if it involves an idea he was "messing around" with last year — a combination of Las Vegas and rollerball. **BW**



### MARK BURNETT ► FOUNDER, *MARK BURNETT PRODUCTIONS*

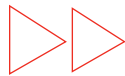
Just prior to the debut of singing competition series *The Voice* on NBC, pundits expressed their skepticism that another talent series could take on the genre's ratings juggernaut, *American Idol*, which was beginning to see its own ratings erode. But the April debut of the series, produced by Mark Burnett and Talpa Media, silenced the naysayers, emerging as the broadcast network's breakthrough hit of 2011.

Besides another season of *The Voice*, Burnett, a self-avowed fan of epic storytelling, is taking on an ambitious 10-hour miniseries for History based on the Bible. Chatting with *realscreen* for last year's Trailblazers report, Burnett alluded to the project, which he's producing with wife Roma Downey, as his "dream project... probably one of the biggest things I've ever done." Five two-hour episodes will tackle in docudrama form the biggest biblical stories. Work on the series is expected to last through 2012, with the project currently slated for 2013. He has big hopes for the series,

telling the *New York Times* that he thinks it will "have the biggest audience History has ever had." Perhaps he has friends in really, really high places.

Burnett also took steps to blaze trails in multi-platform programming in 2011. Earlier in the year, he teamed up with Youtoo.com for a social TV endeavor that will allow viewers to upload 15-second videos of themselves which will air on Youtoo TV. Later in the year, he partnered with tech company ACTV8 on a venture that will allow mobile users to interact with TV content in real time.

Another major business move for Burnett saw the *Survivor* and *The Apprentice* producer team up with Hearst Corp., which also owns a stake in A-E Networks, on a joint venture that will see the two team up on assorted media, production and events-based projects. Hearst acquired a "substantial" interest in Burnett's existing production business as part of the deal. **BW**



## CHARLES ADLER, PERRY CHEN, YANCEY STRICKLER ► FOUNDERS, *KICKSTARTER*

to *realscreen* about the New York based company's plans for the year ahead.

promotional moment and as a good opportunity to call out to audiences.

### Why do you think documentary makers turn to the platform so often?

Documentaries are our single largest subcategory on the entire site. We saw a lot of success with the documentary category very early on, but this year was a very strong one and what it really comes down to is that each Kickstarter [project] is a story, and Kickstarter is ultimately a narrative form of someone telling the story about why they're doing something, how they're going to do it, why it is others should be a part of it. I think there's a flow and rhythm to that that comes very naturally to documentarians.

Of course, documentary filmmakers have to be constant fundraisers. [Kickstarter is] concentrated, it's a lot of effort, but it is a way to consolidate and have the opportunity to use that [effort] as a

### Where is crowdfunding, and Kickstarter, heading?

Even bigger than crowdfunding, [it's] about an assertion of creative independence. In a very fundamental way, artists and regular folks are saying, "I'm going to do this my own way, I'm going to make every choice the way I want to make it," and I think that has a tremendous future ahead of it; the notion of people in charge of their own lives. That won't just happen with Kickstarter. We've seen that recently with Louis CK [selling his comedy video directly online to fans] and to us it's clear that that is the way that culture is moving. I see us being a really big part of that. **KA**

Since the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter was launched in 2009, more than US\$17.5 million has been pledged to projects in the site's documentary category — projects needing funds for everything from post-production to finishing.

Filmmakers turning to the online fundraising platform in 2011 ranged from unknown auteurs to recognizable names such as Colin Hanks (son of actor Tom), Ricki Lake, Gary Hustwit, and Nick Broomfield.

Yancey Strickler (right), who co-founded Kickstarter with Charles Adler and Perry Chen, spoke

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## JANE LIPSITZ & DAN CUTFORTH ► FOUNDERS, *MAGICAL ELVES*

After a decade spent shaping reality TV conventions with genre-defining hits such as *Project Runway* and *Top Chef*, Hollywood-based prodco Magical Elves expanded further into the worlds of fashion, food and art, as well as feature documentaries with the hit Justin Bieber 3D concert film, *Never Say Never*.

Not only did the pop star's concert flick rake in US\$73 million at the domestic box office — making it the third highest-grossing doc of all time — it landed in third place on cult director John Waters' Top 10 Films of 2011 list. Not too bad for a film that cost \$13 million and took only a few weeks to shoot.

The company, headed by Jane Lipsitz and Dan Cutforth, has since launched a feature doc division. "We had planned to do this before the Bieber movie happened because we have always tried to expand our horizons," Cutforth and Lipsitz told *realscreen* in September for a feature marking the prodco's 10th anniversary. "We have some scripted shows we're working on, several digital projects, and we have a couple of documentaries in the works."

The Elves also had a banner year on television with shows revolving around food and art continuing to be a big focus

for the company. The Texas-set ninth season of cooking competition *Top Chef* aired on Bravo, and the spin-off web series starring previously eliminated contestants, *Top Chef: Last Chance Kitchen*, debuted online.

Bravo also aired the second seasons of *Top Chef: Just Desserts* and artistic competition *Work of Art*, coproduced with Pretty Matches Productions, and greenlit two new Elves series for 2012: the international culinary competition *Around The World in 80 Plates* and *Paint the Town*, about six women that work in New York City's gallery scene.

On WE tv, *Braxton Family Values* premiered in the spring and quickly became the network's highest-rated reality show. In May, execs ordered a second, 19-episode season, which began airing in the fall, and later greenlit a spin-off series, *Tamar & Vince*, scheduled to premiere in the fourth quarter of 2012.

The Elves were also among the content producers that will create content for 100 new niche channels YouTube is adding to its online video portal. In partnership with *In Style* magazine, the producers will build on their fashion programming expertise with the Little Black Dress channel. **Kevin Ritchie**

047

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## ZAM BARING ► MANAGING DIRECTOR, KEO FILMS

At the start of 2011 London-based prodco KEO films was nominated for an Academy Award for *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. And while the Banksy-directed film didn't win, there were many other things to celebrate over the course of the year. Its *Welcome to Lagos* got the nod for best factual series at the BAFTAs and a Royal Television Society award, while the C4 series *Hugh's Fish Fight* also grabbed a BAFTA win in the features category, a Grierson Award for best doc series, and heaps of accolades for its multi-platform campaign.

### Can you describe how you approached the multi-platform aspect of *Hugh's Fish Fight*?

Since the start, our cross-platform approach to the campaign has played a significant role in its success. When the series hit Channel 4's screens in January 2011, the online campaign hub at [fishfight.net](http://fishfight.net) got to work in recruiting a loyal and powerful army of 'Fish Fighters' that engaged and encouraged action. With this, we ran a heavily synchronized cross-platform campaign running hand-in-hand that gave our heavily invested viewers somewhere to go to register

their excitement and outrage — and now over three-quarters of a million of them have done so. The campaign achieved a momentous victory in July 2011 when Commissioner Maria Damanaki announced her proposals to reform the Common Fisheries Policy before the EU Parliament.

### What's your biggest accomplishment of 2011?

Programs such as *Terry Pratchett: Choosing to Die*, *Living with the Amish* and *Hugh's Fish Fight* achieved both critical acclaim and massive ratings. It is fantastic to make programs that not only entertain but also hit a nerve with the public. On the cross-platform side, I'm most excited by the launch of our crowd-funding site [Peoplefund.it](http://Peoplefund.it). It's helping to find funding for businesses that want to change the world for the better and in its first week of existence raised £40,000 for a bicycle factory. There's a revenue model and plenty of television opportunities in there too.

### What's next for you?

Bringing KEO's distinctive brand of television to the U.S. **KA**



## KATERINA CIZEK ► DIRECTOR, THE HIGHRISE PROJECT

Filmmaker Katerina Cizek and her National Film Board of Canada partners, including NFB senior producer Gerry Flahive, have been immersed for the past two years in *Highrise*, a web doc series slated to feature numerous chapters over its life span. In 2011, the first chapter of the project rolled out. *Out My Window* was an interactive web project encompassing 360° photography, video, text and music that captured life in high-rise apartments in 13 cities around the world. It took home an International Digital Emmy award for non-fiction — just one of the many accolades it received over the course of the year.

Currently Cizek has two years left to go on the *Highrise* project, which on January 1 of this year launched its latest chapter, *One Millionth Tower*, in the subway stations of Toronto as a series of 30-second silent spots, in addition to its debut on the Internet.

### You direct with a unique Web sensibility. Can you describe your approach?

The NFB has given me this incredible opportunity to be able to explore documentary and non-fiction in a very experimental way and push the boundaries of what documentary and non-fiction mean; in particular, the process

and the methodology I've been able to work in.

What I get to do with *Highrise* is research a story. We develop partnerships before we decide what medium the story is going to be told in. We haven't gotten the rights of a book or taken ideas from academics that they've been working on for 10 years; we're working right alongside academics at the forefront of a lot of content research. We're really seeing the story unfold as it's being discovered.

### What have you been most proud of in 2011?

I'm really most honored to work on the world's first WebGL documentary [which brings interactive 3D graphics to the Web] and breaking new ground on open source, open standard web technology.

### Do you see non-fiction film and TV increasingly embracing multi-platform methods?

Documentary is a language and it is constantly evolving. The documentaries we were doing in the '20s aren't the documentaries we're doing now. And the documentaries we're doing now shouldn't be the ones we're doing 10 years from now. Or even a year from now. **KA**



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## WIM WENDERS ► DIRECTOR

When the doc slate for last autumn's Toronto International Film Festival was first unveiled, the attention on new efforts from directors such as Herzog, Broomfield and Spurlock meant Wim Wenders' latest — a 3D dance film inspired by the life of late German choreographer and ballet director Pina Bausch — was almost overlooked.

However, by the end of TIFF there was no doubt that *Pina 3D* was one of the year's best films, with sold-out screenings and a huge festival buzz. The film opened strongly at the U.S. box office in December, is in the running for two Oscars, and is 94% 'fresh' on reviews aggregator Rotten Tomatoes.

At the heart of the film's praise has been Wenders' innovative use of 3D, which intimately draws out the emotional performances put on by Bausch's dance troop. Although he is best known in the doc realm for his Oscar-nominated effort *Buena Vista Social Club*, critics are calling *Pina* Wenders' best non-fiction work in more than a decade.

### What inspired you to shoot *Pina* in 3D?

Ever since our first encounter, Pina [Bausch] and I had been talking about a common film for 20 years. The fact that it took so long had never been [due to] a lack of enthusiasm or

desire to do it — the problem was simply, the more I tried to imagine a dance film the less I knew how to do it.

The solution one day presented itself in an area I had never looked in before: in technology. My first exposure was a concert film, *U2 3D*. I went not expecting much from the experience other than to have fun. And then I just stared at the screen, flabbergasted, because what I saw was the answer to 20 years of trying to find a way to film dance.

### Were you expecting the film to be a hit?

This is one of the majestic things about filmmaking: you don't know, you can't know, if a film will hit a nerve or not, if it becomes a thing that people can really use in their lives, that can grow and create its own momentum.

### Will you shoot in 3D again?

I'm starting a long-term 3D-documentary in Europe, on architecture. I have no inclination to go back to 2D, both in non-fiction and in fiction. Technology advances fast, and we have just seen the very beginning of what 3D is able to do. Why would I want to go back, after *Pina*? We just scratched the surface! **AB**



## HEATHER CROALL ► FESTIVAL DIRECTOR, SHEFFIELD DOC/FEST

When Heather Croall took the reins at Sheffield Doc/Fest in 2006, the UK documentary festival was struggling. Attendance was stagnant, having ranged from 475-700 attendees over the previous eight years, and the festival was considered a niche, particularly Anglo-centric affair, in need of a fresh direction.

In her first five years in charge, Croall and her team have revitalized the event, bringing in international delegates and glitzy stars, and swelling overall attendance numbers: to 1,236 in 2007, 1,885 in 2009 and 2,310 in 2011. Doc/Fest is now considered a major date on the festival calendar.

Aside from an audacious move that saw the event relocating from November to June, carried out with aplomb in just six months last year, a large part of the event's success has been Croall's implementation of the MeetMarket — a forum event which couples filmmakers with commissioners and funders for personalized one-on-one meetings.

The 2011 MeetMarket generated some £5.6 million (US\$8.7 million) worth of business for producers, according to its organizers, and the event has become a key fixture for fundraising, alongside the more traditional forums at IDFA in Holland and Hot Docs in Canada.

### What was Doc/Fest like when you took over?

It was in a bit of a state in 2005. And from 2006, the first year I was in charge, up until about 2008, we felt as if we were running at 100 miles per hour, just desperately trying to put the thing back on the road. It really needed to embrace documentary in the broad sense of the industry — both people who are in telly and in film.

### What has been the key challenge to date?

Turning it from being a British event into being an international event. I talked to buyers and asked them what they wanted, and they said, "I don't want to sit in another public pitching forum." So we focused on the idea that if we built something really specific in the MeetMarket, it would look like something that didn't exist anywhere else.

### What is your key aim for the future?

We now want to push for a much more international mixture and get Sheffield to be a place that can help filmmakers from non-Western dominated territories increase their presence — Latin America, the Middle East, et cetera. **AB**



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Right: 2011 saw *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* become C4's eighth highest-rating program ever, with more than seven million viewers watching one episode  
Below: C4 head of factual Ralph Lee



## THE CHANNEL 4 COMMISSIONING TEAM ►

Channel 4 exists as an oddity on the UK television landscape. An advertiser-funded network with a public service remit, it must perpetually skate a line between making programming edgy enough to secure the younger audience its advertisers crave, but also with enough educational worth so as to fulfil its PSB commitments.

Indeed, the channel's mission statement as decreed by the Communications Act 2003 is that it must demonstrate "innovation, experiment and creativity in the form and content of programs," while also making sure it "exhibits a distinctive character," setting the template for a marked difference from the BBC.

Such a brief can, at times, inevitably lead to controversy for the network, with programming such as 2007's *The Great Global Warming Swindle* having drawn criticism and complaint.

But more often than not, the team at C4 uses its unique remit as a launch pad for a host of innovative, risqué and often quite brilliant programs. And in 2011, the network's factual team seized the bull by the horns to deliver a slate of fascinating, innovative and memorable programming.

Chief among its successes has been *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, a series spun out of what was originally a one-off doc. The series became C4's eighth highest-rated program ever, with ratings of more than seven million viewers for one episode.

Such has been the cultural impact of the series that U.S. network TLC will next year air an American version of the Firecracker Films format, at which point you'll be able to draw a transatlantic line back to the bold commissioning of a few British C4 execs.

Elsewhere, *Hippo: Nature's Wild Feast* — a live streaming multi-platform event that showed a hippo carcass being devoured over a number of days — pushed the channel's natural history coverage further in the experimental direction started by the breakthrough *Inside Nature's Giants*. Perhaps only on C4 could you find an online clip entitled "Croc eats Hippo's Penis."

Of course, there was some controversy, most notably with *Mummifying Alan*, a one-off doc in which terminally ill taxi driver Alan Billis offered up his corpse to be transformed into a mummy to help scientists rediscover the ancient Egyptian method of body preservation. Perhaps typically of the channel this year, most of the controversy came before the special was aired. Once it had broadcast, the reception from critics was mostly positive.

C4's factual team heads into 2012 with a new man at the helm, with long-serving head of docs Hamish Mykura having departed at the end of last year and former head of specialist factual Ralph Lee now serving in the new role of head of factual. Here he talks to *realscreen* about the plans for the year ahead.

### How would you describe C4's creative remit?

"Restlessly creative" is, I guess, how I'd describe it. It's all about ambition and about creative and editorial innovation, trying to do the new — we're always a bit unhappy to settle and always trying to do things in new ways.

### What was your top 2011 factual highlight on C4?

*Mummifying Alan* was definitely one of my super highlights, because we're always searching for things that take big, mainstream subjects and give completely new insights into them. There are some projects like this one where you really feel the boldness of the idea, the risk involved in the venture, and the difficulty of the access, and I think it led to one of the most remarkable bits of TV last year.

### What are your key aims for 2012?

In specialist factual we want to have more presenters and more unique mediators of subject areas — people like Jimmy Doherty and Guy Martin are really key for us. Also, we're keen not to lose sight of documentary formats, which have been slightly less prominent in the last couple of years, since *Secret Millionaire* and *Undercover Boss*. A lot of people are chasing the football of *Gypsy Weddings* and access-driven docs, but formats are still of real interest to us. **AB ■**



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**Produced by:** Very!  
**Genre:** Factual  
**Format:** 6 episodes x 30 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** Crime & Investigation Channel (Asia)  
**Distribution:** Electric Sky  
**Email:** victoria.stubbs@electricsky.com  
**Tel:** +44 1273 22 96 57



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**Produced by:** Beach House Pictures  
**Genre:** Factual  
**Format:** 10 episodes x 60 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** 3NET  
**Distribution:** Off The Fence  
**Email:** bo@offthefence.com  
**Tel:** +31 20 5200 222



## 24 Hour Asia In HD Stereoscopic 3D

The programme gets under the skin of three cities in Asia – Tokyo, Shanghai and Singapore. It showcases a day-in-the-life of each city, capturing the unique tapestry of Asia's dynamism and revealing each city's secrets within 24 hours. Production in 3D gives viewers a completely different experience and pulls them closer than ever before to the buzz and the energy that characterises each of these Asian cities. Asia comes alive, as never before.

**Produced by:** Infocus Asia  
**Genre:** Factual  
**Format:** 1 episode x 60 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** MioTV and Channel NewsAsia International (Asia)  
**Email:** francis@infocusasia.com  
**Tel:** +65 6341 5612



## The Maverick Chef In HD

I CAME, I ATE, I DECONSTRUCT – this essentially is what *Maverick Chef* is all about. Featuring Alvin Leung, a self-taught 2-star Michelin chef and self-dubbed 'Demon Chef', *The Maverick Chef* is an avant-garde travel food show that takes some of the most iconic foods from different cultures, deconstruct them into their bare essence and reconstruct them into surprising modern renditions that taste just as amazing as they stun. Think a version of the traditional tiramisu as 'Sex on the Beach' or the traditional Chinese soup-dumpling, 'xiaolongbao' as a luscious pink glob.

**Produced by:** Ochre Pictures  
**Genre:** Factual Entertainment  
**Format:** 6 episodes x 30 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** Life Inspired TV  
**Email:** pedrotan@ochrepictures.com  
**Tel:** +65 9816 0859



## The Bandits In HD 360°

*The Bandits* is a raw exposé of crime in Asia, granting viewers exclusive access into the secretive operations of underworld syndicates. With a real life cast of victims, police and hardened criminals, *The Bandits* confronts the ruthless and money-driven minds of those who break the law. From contract killers to prostitution rings and drug manufacturers, *The Bandits* takes a no-holds barred look at the face of Asian criminality today.

**Produced by:** Third Floor Pictures  
**Genre:** Factual  
**Format:** 8 episodes x 30 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** Crime & Investigation (Asia)  
**Email:** omandhas@thirdfloorpictures.com  
**Tel:** +65 6438 7169



## Kungfu Kitchen In HD

*Kungfu Kitchen* is a six-part action-packed culinary adventure series that delves into the highly-disciplined cooking techniques in some of Asia's best known specialties. From the high jinks of knife juggling in Japanese teppanyaki to the contorting acrobatics of Kungfu tea in China, the disciples are stretched to their limits under the exacting standards of their 'Kung Fu' masters. The result is entertaining, adrenaline pumping, but honest and unpredictable television.

**Produced by:** Sitting in Pictures  
**Genre:** Factual Entertainment  
**Format:** 6 episodes x 30 minutes  
**Language:** English  
**TX:** Channel NewsAsia International (Asia)  
**Distribution:** Indigo Films & Television  
**Email:** emmacollin@indigofilm.com  
**Tel:** +44 20 7424 1980

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# CHANGING TIDES

With the appetite for “living history” growing, what lies ahead for the producers of traditional historical docs? Here, five leading commissioners of history programming talk to *realscreen* about the firmly entrenched trend towards reality-based titles, and their key dates and priorities for this year and beyond. BY ADAM BENZINE

As TV schedules become increasingly packed with pickers, pawniers, truckers and restorers, it could easily be assumed that the classic historical documentary – namely a straightforward program detailing a past event – is itself at risk of becoming, well, history.

With a host of big U.S. networks having moved increasingly in the direction of “living history” – reality-style shows that follow people doing jobs in some way related to the past – over the last half decade, broadcasters’ demands for how traditional historical titles are made and presented have also changed.

Indies that previously focused on making archive-packed, talking head-filled, presenter-led fare have had to either change the way

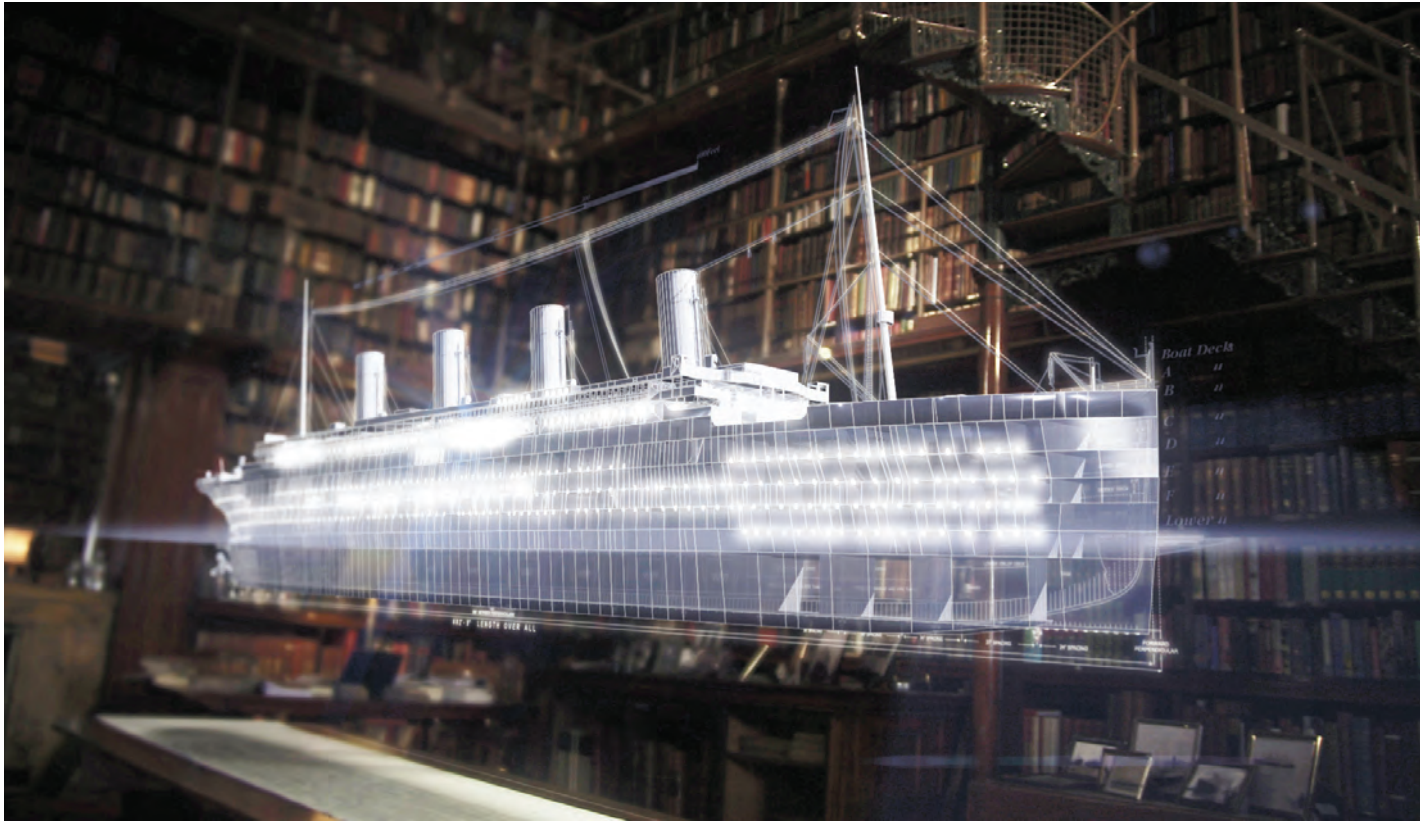
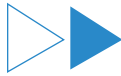
they work, or lose their positions to prodcos that are more comfortable and adept at bridging the reality divide, such as Leftfield Pictures or Original Productions.

“There’s always been an appetite for entertaining storytelling,” says Adrian Wills, general manager of factual for UKTV, the British network which boasts factual channels including Yesterday, Home, Really and Eden.

“I don’t think you can dress up *Ice Road Truckers* or *Deadliest Catch* as ‘living history’ – they’re factual entertainment, and it’s absolutely fine that broadcasters use these types of shows to drive high-volume audiences. They’re effectively an entry point for viewers who we hope will come into a wider range of shows.

“Where the appetite has changed is that there is now less tolerance for traditional authored pieces with a middle-aged man speaking directly down the lens. Producers and broadcasters need to find new and exciting ways of telling stories without being too worthy – insight is great, but it’s secondary to a compelling narrative.”

He adds that what matters most now to commissioners is “the way the stories are told,” explaining that for his net, “content needs to be fast-paced, possibly with an air of mystery or an element of discovery. We want our viewers to be entertained by exciting stories, which means there is now less room for traditional World War Two stories featuring lots of personal testimony.”



Smithsonian Networks' *Titanic: Case Closed* is among the programming marking the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the famous ship

Wills' viewpoint is echoed by David Royle, exec VP of programming and production for U.S. broadcaster Smithsonian Networks. "Audiences have become more demanding, and it's necessary to tell a truly compelling story that is visually strong, and full of real drama," Royle says. "It's also important to utilize CGI and other innovative ways to add a new perspective."

While Royle says "it's hard to argue with the ratings success of shows such as *Pawn Stars* and *Deadliest Catch*," he adds that by integrating these new perspectives into a documentary approach, Smithsonian's aim is to "make ourselves a destination of choice for history fans."

The use of CGI Royle talks about will be particularly apparent in April, when the network marks the 100th anniversary of the Titanic's sinking with *Titanic: Case Closed*, a 90-minute special from Bedlam Productions – the company behind Oscar-winning drama *The King's Speech* – and Airborne TV & Film.

The doc was jointly commissioned with National Geographic International Channels and promises to explore the real reasons behind the famous ship's catastrophic collapse.

Among the other notable dates on the network's calendar, "we'll be marking the anniversary of [Osama] Bin Laden's death in May," says Royle. "Also, we wouldn't be the Smithsonian if we failed to pay tribute to the Space Shuttle by marking the one-year anniversary of its last flight and its arrival at the National Air & Space Museum in April."

Royle calls the Darlow Smithson-produced *Space Shuttle: Final Countdown* "a fascinating film that merges aviation history and science."

As for the Titanic, look for many other networks around the world to mark the 100th anniversary of its sinking. Wills says UKTV will mark the centenary in April "with a couple of shows," as will French public broadcaster France Télévisions.

Laurent Flahault, France Télévisions' commissioning editor for acquisitions

and international coproductions, says that the French network is currently on the hunt for "big programming specials on commemorations and turning points," citing a biographical special that aired last year on Muammar Gaddafi as one of the network's top historical draws.

Programming should be "popular, very visual, comprehensive, revelatory and entertaining," with producers advised to "focus on commemorations" while adopting a "very accessible approach explaining the historical context and showing what the implications are today," he adds, warning that titles should not be "too narrow or too male-targeted."

For France 5, over the last year the channel has been using a Sunday slot to air programming focused on big events and turning points of the 20th century. Among the best performing titles, says Flahault, have been A+E Networks productions *America: the Story of Us* and *102 Minutes that Changed America*; the Nat Geo coproduction *The Egyptian Job*; and



the BBC2 documentary *The Last Nazis: Children of the Master Race*.

In addition to the Titanic centennial, France Télévisions will be looking for programming to air in 2012 tying to the Russian and U.S. elections, and the 50th anniversaries of the death of Marilyn Monroe and the end of the French-Algerian war.

Meanwhile, over in Canada, Sarah Jane Flynn, senior director of factual content at History Television Canada parent Shaw Media, says that of the key anniversary dates for her network, “we’re excited about the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812.”

She adds that 2013 will be “the tip of the spear of the World War One anniversaries, which will start to hit at 2014. For the War of 1812, we haven’t yet scheduled what we’ve got, as there are a bunch of different battles, so we’re figuring out when to start and how to roll it into 2013.”

Like her peers at Smithsonian and UKTV, Flynn says that methods of storytelling have changed, and as such, History Television is “not interested in ‘stock and talk’” anymore: namely, docs consisting primarily of stock footage and talking heads.

“We are looking for big observational documentary series because they do well,” she explains. “We’re also potentially looking for a competition or a game-based show, and we’re looking for host-driven series – and by ‘host,’ I mean people who are actively engaged in a historical pursuit.”

Heading south of the border, the U.S. network that many credit with really spearheading the move towards “living history” – A+E’s History – is still focused, perhaps unsurprisingly, on the type of programming that is bringing in the kinds of ratings that have propelled it into becoming a top five cable network.

For Dirk Hoogstra, History’s senior VP of programming and development, the net’s key shows now really fall into two categories: “artifactual shows,” such as *Pawn Stars*, *American Pickers* and *American Restoration*; and “American originals,” such as *Ice Road Truckers*, *Ax Men* and *Swamp People*.

Despite the reality elements prevalent within the above mentioned shows, Hoogstra says that the key element within both categories is that “when you’re looking at a world that you didn’t know existed, there’s an enormous amount of information that you get from that.

“Our viewers, while being entertained first and foremost, are always at some level looking for some sort of insight and some sort of takeaway; some sort of context,” he explains, “and we have to have that DNA – that History contextual DNA – within our programs for them to be successful.”

Hoogstra adds that the big message that he is attempting to convey to producers on an almost daily basis is that “now is the perfect moment to stop trying to mine the territories that are currently working” for the channel and try to find something else.

“Don’t try to emulate or do something that’s a tiny little dial change from what we currently have,” he insists. “Bring me something that’s going to feel really different.”

*Additional files by Barry Walsh* ■



“Living history” titles such as *Ax Men* (top), *Ice Road Truckers* (middle) and *Pawn Stars* (bottom) continue to work well for A-E Networks’ History

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STOCK FOOTAGE ▶▶

BY ADAM BENZINE

# PUTTING ARCHIVE IN POLE POSITION

**K**evin Macdonald, the Oscar-winning filmmaker behind documentaries such as *One Day in September*, *Touching the Void* and *Life in a Day*, was originally chosen to be the director of *Senna*, a film looking at the life of the late Formula One (F1) champion Ayrton Senna da Silva.

However, a scheduling conflict with the narrative feature *State of Play* saw the Scottish director dropping out (but retaining

an exec producer role) and a talented young fiction director, Asif Kapadia, taking over.

Kapadia was a self-professed “drama guy” – his Cannes-winning feature *The Sheep Thief* and the BAFTA-winning film *The Warrior* were respected in the narrative field, but he had never made a documentary before.

On paper, this could have been a disaster, but it could also go some way to explaining why *Senna* was one of 2011’s best and

For *Senna*, Universal Pictures’ award-winning documentary on the life of the titular legendary F1 racing driver, director Asif Kapadia and archive producer Paul Bell broke with convention to craft an adrenaline-fueled, interview-free drama. After all, with 5,000 hours of archive to play with, who needs talking heads, the duo tells *realscreen*.

The team behind *Senna* had footage from myriad formats to sift through, which led to “two years of viewing”



freshest docs, breaking UK box office records and winning awards around the world.

Kapadia explains that upon taking over the project, he learned that “originally, it was budgeted to only have 40 minutes of archive footage, with 40 minutes of talking head

interviews, and 10 minutes of ‘miscellaneous.’”

That structure quickly went out the window. Instead, the director – backed by a team that included writer Manish Pandey and producer James Gay-Rees – fashioned a documentary made entirely out of archival material, but

edited to play like a breezy 90-minute drama.

Talking heads were recorded, but the interviewees never appear on screen. Instead, the audio from those interviews was stitched together to make a narrative tapestry that plays over an incredible wealth of stock footage.

“The battle was to get the executives to believe the film could be made without contemporary talking heads,” Kapadia recalls. “I didn’t want to shoot them; I don’t like that style of filmmaking. I don’t like voiceovers, I don’t like cutting to stills. I wanted to make it like a drama. The worst thing would’ve been to make a slow film about Formula One.”

Part of the reason *Senna* works so well is the quality of the archival material featured. The racing driver was filmed almost constantly in the 10 years or so he was active in F1 throughout the 1980s and ’90s, and the vast majority of that footage is owned by F1 CEO Bernie Ecclestone, who struck a deal with the team to give them virtually unlimited access to his vaults. That said, the wealth of material available proved to be both a blessing and a curse to the team.

“People think it’s as easy as, ‘Bernie



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Ecclestone just opened up the archive and we found it,” says Kapadia. “I wish it was. The problem was we didn’t know what we were looking for – you open one door and there’s another 10 doors, and the more we looked the more amazing footage we found.”

In all, the team had some 5,000 hours of recorded footage to sift through. “It was two years of viewing, essentially,” recalls Paul Bell, the film’s archive producer. “We were still looking at things, trying to find things, right up until we finally locked the picture.”

One key challenge the team faced was the vast range of formats the archival material came in. “The colorist on this [Paul Ensby at Technicolor] has done a great job to make it look as good as it is because we have everything,” Bell says. “We have stuff which we got from YouTube, we have stuff from U-matic, from Super VHS... From the mid-1980s to the mid-’90s it was the invention of modern digital technology, with DigiBeta and so on, and we’ve really got everything in there.”

Kapadia adds that “not only was there U-matic, one-inch, Super 8 and 35 mm, but we also had audio tapes – TDK A90s recorded in the mid-’80s



– where journalists had interviewed someone. And we looked at the video [and thought], ‘Well, who’s holding that cassette player? Let’s see if we can go and find her and see if she’s still got her tape in the attic somewhere.’”

Such rare audio features in one crucial scene,

in which Senna talks passionately about what driving means to him. Researchers managed to track down a journalist who had interviewed the driver more than a decade ago, only to be told that said journo had since recorded over the original tape. The team was crestfallen.

“But luckily, we were editing for so long that six months later he rang up and said, ‘I’ve found it in another house, somewhere else!’ And we were able to put it in,” says Kapadia. “With any other job, the film would’ve been completed by then, but we were not even locked. So we were able to use it. That was a great part of this process – having time.”

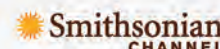
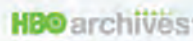
However, with so much footage on offer, structure proved to be a problem for the team. Asked if any great material ended up on the cutting room floor, Bell says, “Two other movies.”

Kapadia adds that the first cut of the film ran to around seven hours in length, with subsequent cuts running to six, five and three hours. “Every day we’d go to work and say, ‘How do we lose 20 minutes today?’” he recalls. “We knew the film was there. We knew we had a brilliant middle and a very powerful

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ending, but the beginning took the longest to sort out. Where do we start the movie?"

Another smart use of the wealth of archive comes in the closing credits, which are packed with exciting footage that did not make the main body of the film, featuring shots of a beaming Senna intercut with car crashes, jet planes and jet skiing aplenty.

Kapadia says it was important to see footage of the racing driver "alive and at his healthiest, happy and [most] fit," during the credits, "because the film is so sad towards the last act." The audience "needs a moment emotionally."

At its heart, *Senna*'s success really comes from the human story within the film, with many critics having remarked that the doc has a wide appeal for viewers who have no interest in F1 or motor racing. The film's access is so intimate that when the tragic ending does arrive, with the viewer seeing the last 30 seconds of Senna's life through the driver's eyes, the emotional impact is enormous.

Also enormous, in documentary terms, was the budget for the film – "£2 million or £3 million," Kapadia estimates. However, for



"The battle was to get executives to believe the film could be made without contemporary talking heads," says Asif Kapadia

Universal Pictures and prodco Working Title Films the sum was "probably about the same as the transport budget" on one of their typical feature films, he notes with a grin. *Senna* is the first documentary feature from UK-based Working Title Films, which deals primarily in scripted production.

But for all the talk of budget, drama and


narrative surrounding *Senna* and its director, and the gap between the documentary and fiction realms, Kapadia is keen to play down the differences.

"Directing is directing," he says. "You have a story that you're trying to tell, you have characters, you have a journey and an arc. In the end, they're not that dissimilar." ■■

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# STOCKSTORIES

As Rod Stewart once sang, “Every picture tells a story.” And every stock clip and collection of footage also comes with a tale or two. Here, execs from assorted footage houses tell *realscreen* the stories behind the stock: the clips they love to see, the ones you want to buy, and the ones that, for one reason or another, got away. BY BARRY WALSH

## MAX SEGAL

► Director, *HBO Archives*



### What are your favorite clips in your archive?

Lennox Lewis knocking out Mike Tyson in their heavily anticipated 2002 heavyweight showdown; a series of late '80s/early '90s featurettes from HBO's Entertainment News division about legendary animators including Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Walter Lantz, Mel Blanc, William Hanna

and Joseph Barrera; and Walt Disney screening a film made for the US Navy from The March of Time's "Show Business At War" newsreel story.

### What's your best-selling collection, or clip?

Our best-selling clips are sweeping HD aerials of New York City and Las Vegas. As a whole, our Entertainment News and The March of Time Newsreels collections perform the best.

### What is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

*Man vs. Shark: An Unsanctioned Competition*, which was a 1979 sports special where divers competed to see who could 'tag' the most sharks.

### What clips really took off for you this past year and why?

Requests for film transfers to HD from The March of Time collection were very popular as more doc producers are realizing the value of not having to compromise with the quality of historic footage. Also, footage of Elizabeth Taylor following her passing, and contemporary HD imagery of Wall Street and voting, as the Occupy movement took off and everyone prepares for next year's presidential elections.

## JOCELYN SHEARER

► Vice president, footage sales, *Discovery Access*



### What's your favorite clip in the Access vaults?

The ultra slo-mo footage from the *Time Warp* series: a dog shaking off water, popcorn popping, grease fires exploding, sumo wrestler fat jiggling, a chainsaw cutting. Part of the appeal is not just seeing the exquisite detail in everyday things, but in the fact that it's basically two curious guys with advanced cameras and technical acumen getting their geek on.

### What's your best-selling collection, or clip?

The shots that sell best are, unsurprisingly, the ones with multiple applications or conceptual interpretations: calving glaciers, stormy seas, diverse crowd and street scenes, a variety of time-lapse shots, space CGI, and of course, sharks!

### What would you say is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

The portraits of human eccentricities: from the *Animal Hoarders* couple with 82 cats and plans to add a human baby to the mix, to the *My Strange Addiction* woman who compulsively eats the ashes of her dead husband.

### What clips really took off for you this past year and why?

Klepto Kitty, the cat who constantly steals items from neighborhood clotheslines and porches under cover of night. You have to see the infrared caught-on-tape moment of this fat cat dragging a double D bra down the street to appreciate.



## PAULA LUMBARD

► Founder, *FootageBank HD*

breaks my heart). Now, I really love our new coverage of Berlin in day and night as the city emerges as a world center for art, architecture and commerce. I am also fascinated by clips of endangered species and animal migrations.

### What's the clip that "got away"?

I would love to represent the piano playing, singing, Labradoodle clip that is on YouTube these days.

### What's your best-selling collection, or clip?

Aerial footage is our best-selling category, but our establishing shots of everything from released homes to motels, community centers, coffee shops and restaurants is our best-selling collection. Also, we have a collection of classic large format films that do well in clip licensing.

### What's your favorite clip in your archive?

My favorite clip varies; for a long time it was an aerial shot across the Manhattan skyline with a full moon. Then it became a segment we represent about a mother polar bear and her babies looking for refuge in a blizzard (one baby does not make it and that just

### What is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

We have a very touching clip of a giraffe born with a birth defect. Its neck is bent and it had to learn to rest it on tree branches to survive. I am astounded by the courage and strength of the creature whenever I see the clip. We also have a clip showing the migration of red crabs across Christmas Island and it is wonderful fun to watch a whole town overcome by these traveling crustaceans.

### What clips really took off for you this past year and why?

We represent the Toronto Argonauts, a Canadian professional football team. Almost every major show on the air, from *The Good Wife* to *Private Practice* to *Modern Family*, has licensed it this fall. We are also having a run on tiger footage right now.



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## COLIN MILLS

► Marketing director, *Skyworks*

times of day to get completely different lighting effects, and then found a reveal shot which I don't believe has ever been done before.

### What's the clip that "got away"?

In 2010, the Icelandic volcano eruption saw most commercial air traffic shut down for several days. We almost had a fantastic opportunity to film around the London Heathrow flight paths with none of the restrictions usually imposed by dodging other air traffic. However, as it turned out, the same safety concerns kept us grounded too. The true irony is that we had lots of footage of the very same volcano that we had shot the year before!

### What would you say is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

Sometimes we find we have clips that only after adding metadata show their true "curiosity value." Some of

the most interesting are wildlife shots, where quite surprising things happen. From South Africa we have a quite rare clip of the nest of the sociable weaver bird and on top of it is an eagle which has decided it is a perfect perch.

Also on the subject of eagles, our pilot in Switzerland was delighted to see a juvenile golden eagle for the first time in his 20-year flying career — we were able to get some stunning footage flying with this eagle.

### What clips really took off for you this past year and why?

This year we have had strong take-up of our footage on the subject of sustainability. Wind farms, solar furnaces and hydro power have all done well, as has our footage of what we might term "positive green imagery," such as rich landscapes. Clearly this has been driven by a surge in communication and programming dealing with these issues generally.

### What's your favorite clip in your archive?

Right now, my favorite clip is of Mount Rushmore from our recent shoot of South Dakota. Mount Rushmore has got to be one of the sites most filmed from the air, so to get something different takes quite a lot of effort. We ended up shooting Mount Rushmore at three different

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## KEVIN SCHAFF

► Founder and CEO, *Thought Equity Motion*

### What's your favorite clip in your archive?

With more than 10 million hours of content under management, it's tough to pick a favorite. However, the BBC Motion Gallery collection is one of our largest collections and contains some of the most stunning HD footage, global coverage and rare archival shots in our library. It is comprised of content from the world's most prominent and widely respected media companies, including the BBC, CBS News, NHK, China Central Television (CCTV), and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Within the BBC Motion Gallery collection, I always enjoy browsing the massive CBS News archive. Amongst its treasures are more than 400 reels of tape shot in the four days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; the Vietnam War; the anti-war movement in the U.S. and the fall of Saigon;

the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s; presidential campaigns and political conventions; the U.S. space program, its successes and failures, including the first man to land on the moon and the Challenger explosion; the Oklahoma City bombing; and, more recently, the events of September 11. The collection comprises more than two million videotapes and 66 million feet of film, including outtakes and other footage never used in on-air reports.

### What's your most unique content category?

Our sports collection is unique, as we have exclusive footage of many top athletes over the course of their careers. For example, we have footage of Michael Jordan playing for the University of North Carolina Tar Heels in the early '80s and Jack Nicklaus's famous 40 foot putt at the 1975 Masters.

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## JESSICA BERMAN-BOGDAN

► President, *Global ImageWorks*

on jazz, conducting and musical comedy; host Alistair Cooke interviewing Frank Lloyd Wright, Dr. Seuss and Sir Edmund Hillary; and Les Paul and Mary Ford explaining their innovative multi-track recording system.

I love watching *Soul Train* clips — the *Soul Train* line with all the great dancers, the fashion and all the great performances. Everybody appeared on *Soul Train* including people you might not expect like David Bowie, Elton John and Justin Timberlake. Rosie Perez even started out as a dancer in the '80s and later went on to choreograph for the show.

### What's your favorite clip in your archive?

A couple of favorites include the iconic TV series *Omnibus* and *Soul Train*. *Omnibus* ran for nearly a decade starting in the 1950s. Guests on the program list as a who's who of American culture, art, music, and science: Leonard Bernstein giving presentations

### What's your best-selling collection or clip?

This is a tough one. However, if I had to choose, it would be clips from our historic travel films collection. The absolutely gorgeous film-backed collection is easily transferred to HD and is a wonderful window to people, places and cultures around the world from the early 1900s to the 1970s. Footage of Hong Kong and

Singapore seemed to have been hot ticket items [this past year]. Pairing that with current HD footage that complements the archival offers a nice balance that licensed well throughout the year.

Additionally, as 2011 marked the 10th anniversary of September 11, just about every 9/11 doc that was produced this past year licensed footage from our unique and extensive 9/11 collection.

### What would you say is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

We have footage of wacky stunts and thrills that include some of the wildest Mexican rodeo bull riding footage I have ever seen.

I also take my hat off to some of the amazing storm chasers we represent who risk their lives to get that amazing tornado or hurricane shot.

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## DANIELLE LEEPER

► Global product manager, video,  
*Getty Images*



### What's your favorite clip in your archive?

One of my favorite archival clips is from our Premium Archive Films collection. It's footage of a 15-year-old Marilyn Monroe frolicking at the beach. The footage may be the first film taken of her. Chester Howell, a friend of Marilyn's guardian, Ana Lower, filmed this footage with his 16 mm camera. Marilyn used to babysit for the children in the film and also had her dates pick her up at their home because it was a nicer

house than the one she lived in.

One of my favorite contemporary creative clips is an aerial from one of our key contributors, Helifilms. Helifilms lobbied for many years to obtain permission from the Malaysian government to shoot aeriels over Kuala Lumpur and they were finally granted clearance. Using gyro-stabilized and infrared cameras they shot unique aeriels including a POV between The Patronas Twin Towers.

### What's your best-selling collection or clip?

Our best-selling editorial collection is Getty Images Entertainment Video, which comprises up-to-the-minute entertainment content uploaded daily, as well as topical and archival content of the celebrities and events that shape our popular culture. Aeriels of desirable locations are always popular top sellers at Getty Images and increasingly clips that conceptualize environmentalism and the global economy are top sellers.

### What would you say is the strangest clip or collection in your catalog?

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Celebrating its 20th anniversary in the television industry, *CABLEready* shows no signs of slowing down. Here, founder and CEO Gary Lico, as well as other execs in the *CABLEready* family and beyond, reflect on the past two decades' challenges and successes, both for the company and the cable TV industry at large. BY KEVIN RITCHIE

# Ready for action

**A**sked if he ever thought *Inside the Actors Studio*, James Lipton's landmark interview show for Bravo, would be a hit, *CABLEready* founder and CEO Gary Lico's answer is an unabashed "yes."

While the veteran distribution and TV exec has earned a reputation as one of the most open, outspoken and outgoing salesmen in the television business, he's nonetheless struggled to overcome one thing.

"I'm very loud and gregarious," he says, "but I have a tough time taking credit for stuff."

## "AHEAD OF THE CURVE"

Based in Norwalk, Connecticut, the proudly independent *CABLEready* has been distributing and developing original programming to cable networks for two decades, and has since branched into Cable U, a research/trend analysis service offered to subscribers; and established the production/duplication company *CABLEready* Productions.

Lico began his career as an on-air talk show host in Milwaukee but switched to syndication sales at SFM Entertainment and later became VP of programming at Katz Communications. He wound up at Columbia Pictures Television where he noticed that the growing number of cable networks was having trouble finding programming. So, he decided to start his own venture and founded *CABLEready* in 1992.

The deal that launched the company – the sale of Hearst's *Capelli & Company* to Nickelodeon – would also set the stage for the way Lico would grow *CABLEready* in the years ahead. When he approached the programming exec for the network at the time, she said she'd already passed on it.

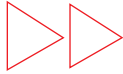
"But she said, 'You know what, Gary? We've seen this show before. Someone from the station and someone else brought it in and we didn't think it was for us,'" he recalls. "But right now we need a show and you've told me

more about this show than anyone else did."

From his time spent in programming, he knew exactly what network execs wanted: research on the buyer, research on the product and friendly service. He decided to focus on developing non-fiction entertainment – beginning with home improvement and cooking shows – produced by independent prodcos outside the major production centers but with a level of quality in line with what major networks would air.

"When you get a project from *CABLEready* it comes with an understanding that it's going to be well-researched, well-produced and oftentimes may be a little bit ahead of the curve," says Henry Schleiff, president and general manager of Investigation Discovery, Military Channel and Planet Green.

One of *CABLEready*'s most successful shows is *Medical Detectives*, a "whodunit"-style investigation series produced by Pennsylvania-based Medstar Television, one of the



**“ Gary understands the market and the content he’s distributing. He doesn’t waste people’s time. ”**

distributor’s first clients. Lico urged EP Paul Dowling to do something about how forensic science is used to investigate crimes, accidents and medical mysteries. The show began airing on TLC in 1996 before rebranding as *Forensic Files* and moving to Court TV (later truTV), later airing on NBC.

As luck would have it, the show hit just as the O.J. Simpson murder trial became a ratings boon for news networks. When it

moved to Court TV, Medstar went into year-round production on the show and has since produced 400 episodes. Lifetime recently secured rights to 100 episodes in the catalog, which it will air as *Medical Detectives*.

“It literally became everything we did because there was no time to do anything else,” says Dowling. “The network wanted more shows quicker than we could produce. Gary handled the international sales as well and that was jumping off the charts.”

Schleiff, previously chairman and CEO of Court TV when it bought *Forensic Files*, saw in the show a completely new take on science.

“They did science in a way that showed how

brilliant the people working in that field are,” he says. “It was about puzzle-solving.”

As for the aforementioned *Inside the Actors Studio*, Bravo Media president Frances Berwick says it’s a testament to Lico and his team that “a talk show, which is probably one of the hardest formats to sell internationally, has sold so well and continues to sell.

“He’s persistent and personable,” she says of Lico. “He understands the market and he understands the content that he’s distributing, and he doesn’t waste people’s time.”

#### EXPANDING THE VISION

Five years ago, CABLEready expanded the



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role of the third-party distributor, launching the research subscription service Cable U, which grew out of the company's practice of sending producers quarterly research reports. The company has also grown through opening the production plant *CABLEready* Productions – the brainchild of SVP of operations Lou Occhicone and VP of operations Eric Benitez – and is getting more involved in front-end development of its series.

Last year the company set its sights on content produced in Canada and partnered with distribution consultant and former UniPix CEO David Fox to source original Canadian programming, both library and properties in advanced development, for international distribution. Increasingly, Canadian producers are churning out quality programs with international market appeal, and *CABLEready* saw in Canada an untapped market in which to develop and license original programming to sell in the U.S.

"We believe we can get to the point where we're working with eight or 10 of the best



Occhicone

Canadian production companies," says Fox.

"Five years ago we never thought about leading a parade into Canada to represent under-represented producers, and that's turned out to be one of our biggest growth areas in the last year and a half," adds Lico.

One of the first production companies brought on board through the venture was Toronto's Buck Productions. *CABLEready* has recently sold two of its series, *Saw Dogs* and *Deals from the Dark Side*; *Saw Dogs* to Velocity and *Deals* to an undisclosed U.S. network.

"They sit down and really look at the concepts I send them, ask the right questions and push

**“ They ask you the right questions and push you to get the right stuff. ”**

073



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CABLEready has sold *Saw Dogs* from Canada's Buck Productions to Velocity in the U.S.

you to get the right stuff," says Buck's head of TV Jim Kiriakakis. "I trusted in their abilities and they trusted in mine."

Key to the development process is research, which Lico and his team encourages their clients to read as if they were programmers.

"When they develop shows with producers they represent, they're constantly trying to

convention and a bus drove by with an advertisement on the side that said 'in the future there will not be 500 channels, there will be one: yours,'" says Lico. "That obviously has stuck with me all these years, which is why the race is always on to develop the programs that can cut across all of those platforms. People don't watch delivery

**“ You know you’re going to have a direct relationship with Gary and his key people. ”**

move them to think more like programmers," says Dale Bosch, who headed Bosch Media, the company behind History's *Monster Quest*, before retiring in 2011. "That's where Gary shines with independent production companies: he's constantly educating them."

The future is a more hands-on approach to development, which Lico says is now occupying most of his staff's time – regardless of the platform that it ends up on.

"Almost 20 years ago I was at a cable

systems, they watch programs."

Philanthropy and mentoring are also areas of keen interest for CABLEready. Lico has held a position as an adjunct professor at Newhouse University in Syracuse and remains on its board. During CABLEready's 10th anniversary, the company created a 10-year scholarship program at the university, and also donated an audio lab to Central Michigan University.

Over the next five years, CABLEready will continue to expand its presence beyond the

U.S., through the Canadian partnership with Fox but also into Europe (it already represents ISO Media in Finland and D4D Media in Spain). It also aims to expand the genres it specializes in and possibly open new offices in either London or Los Angeles.

"We're very focused on building an infrastructure that can promote and withstand growth so regardless of the volume of business we've been able to handle it," says Occhicone.

The goals are designed to strengthen the company's position in the industry, but not at the cost of CABLEready's service mandate.

Christian Drobnyk, SVP of scheduling and acquisitions at Lifetime, calls CABLEready "one of the last truly independent distributors," adding for good measure, "You know you're going to have a direct relationship with Gary Lico and his key people."

Finally, Lico is allowing himself to take pride in that reputation. During this past fall's MIPCOM, he had a chat with Disney/ABC Television Group president Anne Sweeney – the recipient of MIP's annual Personality of the Year Award and the former Nickelodeon programming exec that greenlit the deal that put CABLEready in business. He told her, "If not for you, we wouldn't be where we are."

"She said, 'Well, I hope you're proud of where you've taken it from there,' because she knew I wasn't feeling it," he recalls. "This



*Medical Detectives*, from Medstar Television

time I'm allowing myself to feel it. We've done enormous things without financial backing, without a safety net and, hopefully, without rancor but with respect."

Look for a timeline of CABLEready's first two decades at [realscreen.com/cr20](http://realscreen.com/cr20). ■





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# How was it for you?

As 2011 sneaks out the back door and 2012 comes hurtling into the frame, we at *realscreen* took the opportunity to indulge in the much-loved editorial ritual of the “readers’ survey.” We asked assorted producers to give us their thoughts on the best, the worst and the weirdest of 2011, as well as a little crystal ball gazing for the year ahead.

► **GUY O’SULLIVAN**  
PRESIDENT, *PROPER TELEVISION*

**My favorite factual program/series of 2011 was:** *All-American Muslim*.

**I never thought they’d make a program about...** *The Virgin Diaries*.

**The program/series that people will still be talking about five years from now is:** *Top Gear*.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:** Anything with a Kardashians in it. Hopefully.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** Terms of trade (of sorts) for Canadian producers. Not as good as the UK, but it could be worse. We could be in the U.S.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** The collapsing world economy.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:** *Come Dine with Me*.

**The idea that I’m happiest to have had this year was:** *Prank Science*.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:** Rednecks rule the airwaves.

**The buzzword I don’t want to hear in 2012 is:** It’s not really a buzzword, but I’d rather no one else asked me, “Can you make it more like *Gold Rush Alaska*?”

**My New Year’s resolution for 2012 is:** Sell more formats than I acquire.

► **BRENT MONTGOMERY**  
FOUNDER, *LEFTFIELD PICTURES*

**My favorite factual program of 2011 was:** *An Idiot Abroad*. Ricky Gervais missed his calling as a science teacher.

**I never thought they’d make a program about...** I can’t talk — most people would’ve said “pawn brokering” two years ago.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** Networks expanding their hours of original programming for non-scripted.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** Normal casts thinking they deserve *Jersey Shore* money.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:** *Moonshiners* — it’s like the real-life *Boardwalk Empire*.

**The idea that I’m happiest to have had this year was:** *Monster In-Laws*.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:** No one wants to buy an ultimate eating competition titled *Little People, Big Appetites*.

**The buzzword I don’t want to hear in 2012 is:** “Mini-pilot,” and no network [execs] should feel singled out, as you’re not alone... but 21 minutes is a pilot!

**My New Year’s resolution for 2012 is:** To produce a real-life sitcom, straight from mini-pilot to series if I have to.

► **DAWN PORTER**  
FOUNDER, *TRILOGY FILMS*

**My favorite factual program of 2011 was:** How to choose! *America: The Story of Us*; *What Not to Wear*; *Chopped*.

**My favorite documentary of 2011 was:** *The Interrupters*.

**I never thought they’d make a program about...** Honing your hog hunting skills.

**The series and/or documentary that people will still be talking about five years from now is:** *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* for bringing 3D to documentary and *Through the Wormhole* for making science impossibly cool.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** New energy around international coproductions.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** The cost cutting at established broadcasters like the BBC and PBS.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:** Time-lapse photography of the Antarctic showing global warming.

**The idea that I’m happiest to have had this year was:** Finding good international coproducers.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:** Persistence pays off.

**The buzzword I don’t want to hear in 2012 is:** Transmedia!

**My New Year’s resolution for 2012 is:** Master transmedia, hone my hog hunting skills, and travel to Antarctica.



► **JIM KIRIAKAKIS**  
HEAD OF TELEVISION, *BUCK PRODUCTIONS*

**My favorite factual program of 2011 was:**  
*Storage Wars*. It has "Wars" in the title — how could I not pick it? Plus, every time I go visit my storage facility I can't help but think what everyone else must have in their boxes. Addictive TV.

**I never thought they'd make a series about:**  
Coupons. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall for that pitch. Brilliant!

**The program/series that people will still be talking about five years from now is:**  
*The First 48*. Probably the best non-fiction series on TV ever. Access. Storytelling. Stakes. Boom — it has all the ingredients.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:**  
The outcry against the Kardashians! Slight glimmer there.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:**  
Loss of network identities. "Give me big characters and a world I have never seen." Great... next. "Give me big characters and a world I have never seen." Great... next.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:**  
*Storage Wars*. Full stop.

**The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:**  
The idea that others will be putting in the answer above this one next year — *Saw Dogs*.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:**  
Feral hogs are a real problem.

**The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2012 is:**  
"Big characters."

**My New Year's resolution for 2012 is:**  
Find more big characters because I don't think that buzzword is going anywhere and I am good at it.

► **ABBY GREENSFELDER**  
CO-FOUNDER, *HALF YARD PRODUCTIONS*

**My favorite factual program of 2011 was:**  
*Hillbilly Handfishin'* (self-serving but true!).

**I never thought they'd make a program/series about...**  
Virgins.

**The program/series that people will still be talking about five years from now is:** The Kardashians — how a reality show created a huge fashion brand.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:** The royal wedding — they'll have moved onto the royal baby!

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** Seeing more networks like AMC getting into the non-fiction space.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry was:** The number of copycat shows.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:**  
*Storage Wars*... Thom Beers does it again!

**The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:** *Hillbilly Handfishin'*. There's nothing else like it (yet) on TV.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:**  
When the economy is soft people still want TV.

**The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2012:**  
"Organic."

**My New Year's resolution for 2012:**  
Survive the Year of the Apocalypse!

► **BRUCE DAVID KLEIN**  
PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER,  
*ATLAS MEDIA CORP.*

**My favorite factual program/series of 2011:**  
*Storage Wars*.

**I never thought they'd make a program about:** It's a tie between the weed shows and the lady hoppers.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:**  
*The X Factor*.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** The driver of the business — ad sales — was surprisingly solid despite the jittery economic climate.

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:** The continuing erosion in the number of episodes ordered of a series — from 13... to eight... to six... to five... to "Kill us now!"

**The idea that I'm happiest to have had this year was:**  
Can't reveal it — we're in production now.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:**  
You can make a crapload of money selling crystal meth, as seen in *Breaking Bad* — an engaging and really well-written show.

**The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2012 is:** "Space" — as in, "We're not in the urban space anymore."

**My New Year's resolution for 2012 is:**  
To be kinder to my Apple TV when it crashes.

► **JOHN FARREN**  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, *360 PRODUCTION*

**My favorite factual program of 2011 was:**  
Our very own *James May's Things You Need to Know*. It's rare when you make something that makes the audience, critics and channel go, "Wow! Now that is new." What makes it so new? Well, you'll have to watch the show, won't you?

**I never thought they'd make a program about:**  
Pass. It's not all about TV any more, and if you look at the Internet, well, everything is on there. The limits on spectrum have gone and anyone can make whatever they want. Sometimes not many people will watch.

**The program that people will still be talking about five years from now is:**  
Pretty much anything you make that is any good is going to be watched somewhere, in classic long tail fashion. Not sure there was any stand out factual though — obviously the David Attenborough natural history is huge, and the fact *ent Jersey Shore* copies are everywhere. And they both do

a really important thing, in that they create actual *fans*, not just casual viewers.

"Proper" factual — or shows that actually tell us stuff that might make us pause to think about the world we live in — isn't doing it. And I think we're not doing it because we're not grasping the storytelling possibilities that are opening up via new possibilities like second screen, and the audience's expectation that they can and should be in a dialogue not just about, but with the material.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:**  
Who won this year's *X Factor*. But that doesn't matter, 'cause they'll all be talking about *X Factor 2013*, because the brand has created fans by understanding that in 2011, people want to be immersed in what they love, and participate.

**The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:**  
I love MTV's brilliant commitment to making shows/stars/

content in a brilliantly thought-through way that totally creates fans. Oh, am I repeating myself?

**The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:**  
As much of a fan as I am of the blockbuster entertainment hits, it is all getting a bit risk-free. Where is the brilliant originality of *I'm a Celebrity*, *Get Me Out of Here*? It's a staple now, but was a very risky commission. More risk, please.

**The idea I really wish I thought of was:**  
I have the idea, I just can't get anyone to pay for it — yet!

**The idea that I'm happiest to have had this year was:**  
*James May's Things You Need to Know*.

**If 2011 taught me one thing, it was:** Patience.

**The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2012 is:**  
"Let's get back to basics."

**My New Year's resolution for 2012 is:** Courage! ■■

think about it



# BUILD IT, AND THEY WILL COME

October Films' recent three-part Sky series, *The Great Treehouse Challenge*, brought the prodco together with three UK communities to create something that would last well beyond the air date of the final episode. Here, October Films' managing director Denman Rooke discusses the value of social endeavor programming for the producer, the broadcaster and the viewer.

**S**ocial endeavor programming, of which our recent production, *The Great Treehouse Challenge*, is a prime example, is an increasingly popular genre in the TV landscape. This trend displays no signs of abating. In an age of economic uncertainty and financial hardship, such shows utilize the power of television as leverage to help a community achieve more than it could alone, through supporting, stimulating and drawing attention to the community and individuals at the heart of the process and story.

There is, of course, the question of how genuinely a show can interact with communities and what social impact can be really generated. The answer comes down to the individual program makers. It's a truism that as soon as you turn a camera on a group of people they act differently. But if you ensure in the budget there is enough time to spend with the communities, listening to their concerns and responding effectively to them, ultimately, you will leave them something they care about and are willing to maintain.

*The Great Treehouse Challenge* did indeed produce some great treehouses – not to mention plenty of challenges. It was an unusual show to produce: not only did we have to tackle complex and ambitious treehouse construction, sometimes in the remotest parts of the UK, but, significantly, it put local communities at the very heart of the shows. They were active participants as opposed to mere bystanders – something that is absolutely vital to get right when producing content of this nature.

Just as important is ensuring that, as a producer, your involvement does not end with the final day of filming. In social programming, your impact must be real, and long-lasting – your programming will benefit as a result. In our instance, each treehouse needed a minimum lifespan of five years. This could not be a quick fix for a TV program, but a genuine act of social endeavor.

Sky was also keen that we build the structures in keeping with the channel's commitment to sustainable development.

After all, the shows are in part commissioned to raise awareness of global environmental issues – another emerging trend in TV – and we had to practice what we preached.

It was always going to be key that community volunteers helped us to build each treehouse. Moreover, this had a positive effect on the finished product. There is something hugely engaging in watching a group of people achieve a seemingly impossible task by working together – the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Ultimately it is only if the community cares enough to get involved that we, as program makers, are able to generate the authentic narrative which is vital if we are to get an emotional engagement with a wider audience.

Social endeavor programming is challenging to make, counterintuitive to the 'control freak' psyche of TV producers, and rife with the potential for schedule and budget overruns. But the final result can be rewarding for the communities and riveting for the viewer. ■



and one more thing ►►

# PARENTAL GUIDANCE

BY BARRY WALSH

**In** 2008, *New York Sun* columnist Lenore Skenazy gained international notoriety after penning a piece in which she recounted how she'd let her nine-year-old son Izzy take the New York City subway by himself. Pundits chimed in with varying opinions on the matter, with the phrase "America's worst mom" appearing in more than one headline.

Today, Skenazy publishes the blog *Free Range Kids* and is using that notoriety to provide guidance to moms and dads and warn them of the pitfalls of overprotective parenting. The counseling continues via the Cineflix-produced series *World's Worst Mom*, airing in numerous territories worldwide through TLC International and in Canada on Slice under the name *Bubble Wrap Kids*.

**When you look back at that 2008 *New York Sun* article now, are you grateful for the attention it received?**

I've been a reporter for 20 years — I only wish that all my columns went around the world and stirred debate and controversy and were reprinted in other languages. That didn't happen to my first 30,000 columns. So I am grateful. I didn't even realize I had a parenting philosophy when I wrote that column. It did allow me to crystallize what I believe — our children are safer and more competent than our culture leads us to think.

**In the course of making the series, which parental behaviors struck you as the most surprising?**

There was one mother of a child, let's say it was a nine-year-old, and not only would she go into the bathroom with her daughter, but she'd go into the stall with her. And that to me was so unnecessary. That just told me, "Wow, you're not dealing with rational fear here."

**You say there seems to be a disconnect between the memories parents have of their own, more carefree childhoods and the parenting they give their own children. Why is that, and how can it be corrected?**

You're constantly seeing stories about kids being abducted, constantly being warned to not let it happen to you, and then constantly being sold products that will somehow prevent it from happening. It's not like individual people have suddenly all gone crazy in the same way — it's that there's a society bearing down on us, telling us that the only good parents are the ones that watch their kids 24/7. That's what I deal with on the show — the parents who have come to believe that.

**What do you hope audiences might get out of the series?**

My show never says it's a perfect world and that we have to ignore crime. It's just saying that we need to keep things in perspective, like our parents did. Our parents knew that there was bad stuff out there and they told us not to go off with the guy offering candy. That's still good advice. ■

# Bounce or Splat?



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